

The HAPPINESS of a Successful
MINISTRY:

IN FOUR
SERMONS,

Begun at the Return of the
Friday Lecture,

IN
SILVERSTREET,
7th October, 1715.

By JEREMIAH SMITH.

Publish'd at the Request of several of
the Hearers.

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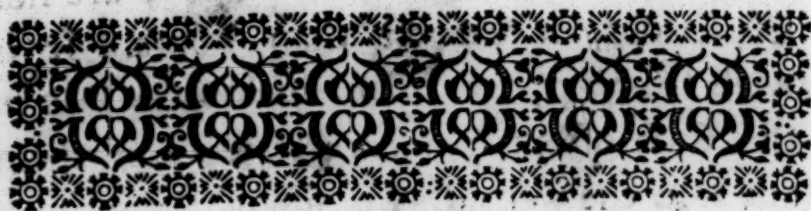


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TO THE
GENTLEMEN *and* OTHERS,
My much esteemed Friends,
Who Support and Attend the LECTURE
In Silverstreet.

S I R S,



THE DISCOURSES following
were prepar'd for the Pulpit
only, not the Press; yet the
Respect and Service which I
owe You, permitted me not
to refuse their Publication, at
the Request of divers of You; especially,
Your Hope withal being signified, that by
this Means they may be somewhat farther
useful, than to the few that heard them. If
my Expectations therein be weaker, my

The DEDICATION.

Wishes to that Purpose, to be sure, are not less serious, or earnest than Yours. It is with *Writings, (the Births of the Mind)* as in the Case of our *Children*; if we send them out into the World, we follow them with our own, and all others Prayers which we can engage, that they may be prospered to those good Ends for which they are designed; chiefly to subserve the Glory of G O D, and the Good of Men, in all the Ways for which they are fitted. The same I would beg of You in reference to these, and all other my ministerial Endeavours; * that they may be accepted of C H R I S T, and made abundantly successful, in promoting real Religion and the Good of Souls; that they may come to You, and to all that shall read or hear them, with a *Fulness of divine Blessing*; which will be the greatest Joy of,

Sirs,

Your most Respectful

and Obligated Servant,

Jeremiah Smith.



ROM. XV. 29.

*And I am sure, that when I
come unto you, I shall come
in the Fulness of the Blessing
of the Gospel of CHRIST.*



T. Paul, the great Apostle
of the Gentiles, on whom
lay the Care of all the
Churches, had long
Thoughts and Desires of
seeing the Saints at Rome; Rom. i.
that he might impart unto
them some spiritual Gift, to the
End they might be establish'd.

But being many Ways hitherto hinder'd of his
Purpose, he writes to them, for the present,
this excellent Epistle; at the Close whereof he
signifies, that he was not without Hope and
Prospect of seeing them shortly, when his Ser-
vices for the poor Saints at Jerusalem should be
dispatch'd: And to quicken their Desires, and
engage their Prayers for him, that his Purpose

B

might

might be succeeded, he suggests how much his Coming to them would be to their Advantage. *And I am sure, (says he) that when I come unto you, I shall come in the Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ.*

WHAT now, on the Return of this Exercise, I would observe and insist on, from these Words, is this; viz.

MOST happy is that Ministry which comes to a People in the Fullness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ.

ST. Paul quickening the Desires of the Romans for his Coming by this Argument, shews the Happiness of the Thing in itself, however ordinary Ministers may not have like Certainty as he had in reference to the Event, of which some think he was specially assur'd in that Case, by the Spirit of GOD.

IN speaking hereto, we may enquire,

- I. WHAT is the Gospel?
- II. WHY it is term'd the Gospel of CHRIST?
- III. WHEN does a Ministry come to a People in the Fulness of the Blessing hereof?
- IV. How appears the Happiness of such a Case?
And then,
- V. WHAT Use and Improvement is to be made of it?

I BEGIN with the first of these.

Q. I. WHAT is the Gospel?

Ans. 'TIS the Doctrine of God in Christ reconciling the World unto himself, not imputing their Trespases unto them. So the Apostle describes it, when he speaks of the Ministry of Reconciliation, to wit, saith he, *That God was in Christ reconciling, &c.* Here is the Good-News, the Glad-Tidings which Ministers are to preach and publish; the most happy and comfortable that can possibly reach a Sinner's Ear. Sin hath made a fatal Breach, hath set God and Man at Enmity; the Consequence of which, if not remedy'd, must be everlasting Ruin: Happy Discovery then of a Way of Peace and Friendship between God and Man again. The Law could speak nothing but Death and Misery, for the Violaters of it; but here is *Tabula post naufragium*, a Plank after Shipwreck, by means whereof Sinners may escape. Should any, for the Greatness of such a Mystery, say, as *Nicodemus* in another Case, *How can these Things be?* The Apostle both confirms and clears it, *For He hath made him to be* 2 Cor. v. 19. *Sin for us, who knew no Sin, that we might be made the Righteousness of God in him.* A gracious Substitution there is, of CHRIST the Son of GOD, in the Room and Stead of poor fallen Creatures, to bear their Sins, and make Atonement for them, by offering up himself a Sacrifice on the Cross; that such as believe in him may be accepted, and dealt with as righteous Persons; being united unto Christ by Faith, his Righteousness may be theirs; not as wrought out by them, but by virtue of their Union with him, graciously accounted or imputed to them. So theirs, as their Sin was his; not inherently,

or as committed by him, but thro' the Constitution of GOD, with his own Consent, *made his*, to be expiated and done away by him.
 2 Cor. vi. Here is Grace, as the Gospel is call'd, from the
 1. Rise, and Spring, and Matter of it, a Declaration of the divine Good-will to the sinful Children of Men. Thus of the first Enquiry, What the Gospel is?

Q. II. WHY is it term'd the Gospel of Christ?

A. I. 'Tis *his Gospel*, as He with the Father and Spirit is the Author of it, the eternal Project and Purpose thereof, and the Gift of it in Time, was by him. For it holds here, as in other Things, *Opera Trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*, All Works or Acts of the Trinity, which have their Term without their own Being, are undivided: As all concurr'd in the First Creation, *Let us make Man*; so in all that concerns the Second. The Thing itself, with the Declaration and Discovery of it, that, and how it shall be, this is from GOD, all the Persons in the Trinity. Whence the Gospel is sometimes call'd absolutely the Gospel of GOD, and the Word and Ministry of it, said to be of him. Nor could its Rise indeed be from any other; no mere created Wit or Understanding could have invented or thought of it; or, if it could have come into the Thoughts of any Creature, would such have had Right or Power, to have constituted or appointed such a Thing, only GOD, who had Wisdom to contrive, had Authority and Goodness to make such a Constitution. Who but He, who is the supream Lord and Ruler, could any way relax his first Law? or change the Method of Dealing with his Creature? admitting a Surety

Rom. i. 1.
 1 Tim. i.
 11.
 2 Cor. v.
 18.

a Ransome for him? None but GOD, the supreme Ruler, could do this, and so make Way for the Gospel, which therefore must be of Him. Christ, with the Father, and the Spirit, is the Author of the Gospel; therefore is it well call'd his.

2. THE Plot and Design of it was laid not only by him, but in him. By him as God, and in him as God-Man and Mediator. Whence he is said to be given for a Covenant of the People. Himself Isa. xlii. 6. as the Sum and Substance of the Covenant, and — xlix. 8. Ground of it. *I will make with you an everlasting —lv. 3. Covenant, even the sure Mercies of David.* By David, is meant Christ of the Seed of David. The Purposes of Grace from Eternity were laid in him: *Who hath saved us, and called us with an* 2 Tim. i. 9. *holy Calling, not according to our Works, but according to his own Purpose and Grace which was given us, in Christ Jesus, before the World began.* The Promises of Grace are all made in Christ. All the Promises of GOD, in him are Yea, and in 2 Cor. i. him Amen. Where is signify'd, not only the 20. Truth and Sureness of the Promises, but the Way and Ground of them, they are in him, i. e. in Christ. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (saith the Apostle) who hath blessed us with all spiritual Blessings in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him, before the Foundation of the World.* Christ is not indeed the Cause of Election, but it is in him that any are chosen; and as is the eternal Choice, so are all spiritual Blessings, the Fruits thereof, in him too; that first Chusing is the Ground and Rule of all after Steps and Proceedings; as that was in Christ, so is all the Grace, and Provisions, and Declarations of the Gospel, all in him; for so only are the

the Proceedings of GOD for Man's Recovery, made feasible and consistent, standing with his Honour and our Safety ; so it is that *Mercy and Truth meet together, and Righteousness and Peace kiss each other.* He, who is God-Man, is fit to be a middle Person between the offended Deity and Man the Offender, to make up the Breach, and bring about Salvation ; not only without Detriment to the Rights of GOD and of his Government ; but to the exceeding Advancement of his Glory. There could have been no Gospel therefore, no such *glad Tidings* of Peace and Reconciliation between GOD and Men, were there not such an One, in whom the Project is laid ; which is a good Account why the Gospel is term'd the Gospel of Christ, the Plot and Design of it was laid in him.

3. IT may be call'd the Gospel of Christ, as the first and chief Preacher and Publisher thereof, with highest Authority and Commission from the Father. The Gospel may be taken either more largely, or strictly and specially : Largely speaking, it was indeed from the Beginning ; I mean, presently upon the Fall. GOD himself preach'd it to our first Parents, and no Peace, Comfort, or Salvation could ever have been without it. But the first Discoveries of it were very obscure, as in that Promise, *The Seed of the Woman, shall break the Serpent's Head.* Some more Light was gradually let out, in Types and Figures, and many Adumbrations ; the Ceremonial Law, was a *Shadow of Things to come.* But few comparatively, thro' their own Blindness, and the Obscurity of the Medium, could see to the End of those Things. But when Christ came, *The Mystery hid from Ages and Generations,* was then
openly

Gen. iii.
15.

Colos. i.
26.

openly reveal'd, God, who at sundry Times, and Heb. i. 2.
in divers Manners, spake in Time past unto the Fa-
thers by the Prophets, hath in these last Days spoken
unto us by his Son, viz. more plainly, clearly and
fully than before; on which Account, Disregard
to the Gospel, taken in this special and eminent
Sense, is represented as highly dangerous. If the Heb. ii. 2,
Word spoken by Angels, (that is, the Law given by 3.
the Disposition of Angels,) were stedfast, and eve-
ry Transgression and Disobedience received a just Re- Acts. vii.
compence of Reward; how shall we escape if we ne- 53.
glect so great Salvation? (that is, the Gospel)
which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord.
The Gospel-Day dawn'd, as it were, in the
Preaching of John the Baptist, whose Ministry
therefore was in a Sense call'd, The Beginning of Mark i. 1.
the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As
Day-break we sometimes call Day, tho' the
Sun be not yet above the Horizon; but
properly it did not commence till Christ the
Sun of Righteousness arose, and by his Preach-
ing sent forth his bright Beams to enlighten the
World: The Times before were rather Times of
Darkness; or like the Night-season, which
hath only the lesser Lights of Moon and Stars;
in Christ's Personal Ministry began the clear
Gospel-Day. The Law came by Moses, but Grace John i. 17,
and Truth by Jesus Christ: The most eminent 18.
Discovery and Offer of Grace, that is, the
Substance and Truth of all those Shadows and
Prefigurations of Things that had been under
the old Dispensation. No Man hath seen God
at any Time, the only begotten Son, which is in the
Bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. He
has both in his Person and Teaching given the
best and most sutable Discovery of Him, and
of his Grace and Goodness to poor laps'd Men.
Thus

Thus then the Gospel is the Gospel of Christ, as the first and chief Publisher of it to the World, as well as the Author and Foundation of it. Other Ministers are Servants in his House, who have all their Doctrine and Authority from him; in which Sense, *viz. as Stewards of the Mysteries of God*, the Word and Gospel are call'd, their Word, and their Gospel. God shall judge the Secrets of Men by Jesus Christ, according to my Gospel, saith St. Paul. And again, *To him that is of Power to establish you, according to my Gospel, and the Preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the Revelation of the Mystery which was kept secret since the World began.* My Gospel, agreeable to the Preaching of Jesus Christ, and grounded on it, He being the Revealer, and the first and most authoritative Publisher of it; other Publishers were sent out by him, and receiv'd their Instructions from him: *A Dispensation of the Gospel is committed to me*, said the chief of the Apostles. And elsewhere, *The Gospel which was preached by me, is not after Man, for I neither received it of Man, neither was I taught it but by the Revelation of Jesus Christ.* 'Tis Christ's Gospel then, as proceeding from his Authority, and first publish'd by him. Again,

4. IT may be call'd the Gospel of Christ, as he is the great Subject and Matter of the Gospel. Paul, call'd to be an Apostle, separated to the Gospel of God, (saith he) concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. To preach that Gospel whereof Christ is the main Argument; whence preaching the Gospel, and preaching Christ, are put for the same Thing: *We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.* For (saith he) God, who commanded the Light to shine out of Darkness, hath shined

in our Hearts, to give, (or that we should give) the <sup>Πνεῦμα φωτισ-
μου τῆς γνῶ-
σεως, &c.</sup> light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God, in the Face of Jesus Christ, that we should communicate and spread the Knowledge of God in Christ: This is the Business of the Gospel Ministry. I determined to know nothing among you, (saith the same ^{1 Cor. ii.} Apostle) save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Among you Corinthians, rich and learned, and polite as you are, or think yourselves, the most of any among the Gentiles, counting others barbarous, yet the main Subject of my Study and Preaching among you, shall be a crucified Jesus. That People may know him, and the Power of <sup>Phil. iii.
8, 9, 10.</sup> his Resurrection, and Fellowship of his Sufferings, being made conformable unto his Death, viz. Dying unto Sin, as he died for it. This was that Knowledge which St. Paul was most desirous of himself, and studious to spread and propagate among others. I count all Things but Loss (saith he) for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the Loss of all Things, and count them but Dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own Righteousness which is of the Law, but that which is thro' the Faith of Christ, the Righteousness which is of God by Faith. After which, follow the Words before cited, That I may know him, &c. Christ fills, *utramque paginam*, both Pages of the Book of God; the Old Testament held forth Christ to come, the New as come: In the Old was Christ under a Vail, in the New openly manifested and revealed: His miraculous Conception and Birth; his innocent and spotless, useful and beneficial Life; his bringing in perfect Righteousness, going about doing Good to the Bodies, and especially to the Souls of Men; his pure and holy Doctrine and Pre-
cepts;

cepts; his meritorious Sufferings and Death, Resurrection and Ascension, and Sitting at the Right Hand of God, sending down the Spirit; All that concerns his Person and Offices, the glorious Benefits that we have by him, with the Means and Way of becoming Partakers of those Benefits; all these have we in the Gospel.

Eph. ii. 20. *We are built upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner-stone: That wherein they both meet and center, and by which they are united and knit together, and upheld. In a Word, Christ is the Marrow and Substance, the chief and main Thing in the Gospel; the Pearl of Price, which it brings, and which enriches all who by Faith receive him, and get Interest in him. Which is a good Account, why the Gospel may be call'd the Gospel of Christ, viz. As He is the chief Matter and Subject of the Gospel. Where-to may be added,*

5. *It is the Gospel of Christ, finally, as He is the End of it. The End of the Gospel, is either immediate, or ultimate; and Christ is respected both Ways.*

1. *THE immediate Aim and End of the Gospel is to call Sinners unto Christ, to unite them by Faith to him, and build them up, and at last bring them to eternal Happiness in and by him.*

John xx.
31.

This is the End of the Gospel written; These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have Life thro' his Name. And likewise of the Gospel preach'd; Thro' this Man (viz. Christ) is preached unto you Forgiveness of Sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all Things from which we could not be justified by the Law of Moses.

Acts xiii.
38. 39.

When

When he himself was preaching this Gospel to a great Audience, what does he drive at, but bringing Sinners to him. *In the last Day, that John vii. great Day of the Feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, 37.*

If any Man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.

Whoever is sensible of his spiritual Wants, and pain'd and distress'd under them, and earnestly desirous of Supply and Relief, let him believe in me, and he shall be refresh'd and satisfy'd with my Grace and Spirit. The Gospel is not only to reveal Christ, and shew Who, and What He is, how able, how suitable, and every Way sufficient a Saviour; so He is the Matter of the Gospel: But it is also to invite and call Sinners to him, and be the Instrument in the Hand of his Spirit to work Faith in the Heart, and bring to a Compliance with the Gospel Offer, and make poor Souls effectual Partakers of the Grace and Benefits of it, that's its End. 'Tis *the Rod of Christ's Strength*, by which he subdues Psal. cx. Souls unto himself, and makes them *willing in the 2, 3.*

Day of his Power; and the Means of maintaining Grace when wrought, and improving and increasing of it, and actuating holy Habits; which is call'd, building up in Christ, and walking in him: The Gospel is to call and to help to this. *As ye have received Christ Jesus Coloss. ii. the Lord, so walk ye in him, saith the Apostle. 6 7.*

Live in the Exercise of Faith and all Christian Graces and Duties; walking, as far as may be, as Christ himself walked; *Who left us an Example, that we should follow his Steps*: And keep firm your Standing; *Rooted and built up in him, and stablish'd in the Faith, as ye have been taught, viz. by the Gospel*; this teaches and helps (the Power of Christ co-operating) to persevere in Holiness, even till Christians come

Eph. iv.
11, 12.

to the End of their Faith, the Salvation of their Souls. Thus then, 'tis the Gospel of Christ, as 'tis his Instrument and Means for Calling Persons to him, directing and guiding them in their Walk with him, and stablishing and building them up in him, till they come at last to eternal Happiness in him. That's the immediate End of the Gospel, and the Ministry of it. *He gave Pastors and Teachers, for perfecting, or setting in Joynt, the Saints, till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ.* 'Tis finally Christ's Gospel, then, as the immediate End of it is to call Sinners to Christ, and bring Believers to eternal Happiness in him. And,

2. 'Tis, finally, *his Gospel likewise, as the highest and ultimate End of it is the Glory of God in Christ.* The Glory of GOD, must be the End of all the Works of GOD; and it is so especially of this Work of Redemption and Salvation by Christ, and of all the Declarations of it, and Means of effecting and bringing it about. The highest Glory that GOD and Christ have, is by the Gospel, which was therefore contriv'd and given forth to illustrate and magnify the Perfections and Attributes of GOD, which appear brighter here than in the Work of Creation; divine Wisdom, Power, Holiness, Goodness and Mercy, yea, and Justice and Truth also, are manifested by the Gospel, more than any other Way; and therefore GOD and Christ by this more glorify'd. Herein is eminently display'd GOD's Hatred of Sin, his punitive Justice in his Son's being made a Sacrifice for it,
and

and Riches, of Grace, and Mercy for them that believe. Well may that be call'd the Gospel of Christ, the great and ultimate Intendment whereof, is the Exaltation of the Glory of God in Christ, *Therein, as in a Glass, now, beholding the Glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same Image, from Glory to Glory, by the Spirit of the Lord.* Christ is now honour'd in this glorious Change, that thro' the Gospel is wrought on Souls by his Spirit; but most of all *hereafter* will He come to be glorify'd in his Saints, ² Thess. and admir'd in them that believe. The glorious ^{i. 10.} Work and Effects of the Gospel upon them, will be so many standing Monuments to his Praise. Wherefore (saith the Apostle there to the *Thes-* ^{Verse 11,} *salonians*) *we pray for you always, That our* ^{12.} *God would count you worthy of this Calling, and fulfill all the Good-pleasure of his Goodness, and the Work of Faith with Power, that the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorify'd in you, and ye in him, according to the Grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ.* The Glory of Christ, and the Salvation of Saints, are wrap'd together, in the Gospel; and we according to it, look immediately to the latter; yet the ultimate Aim, must be at the former; that Christ, with the Father and Spirit, may in all Things be glorify'd: And thus is the Gospel, Christ's Gospel; *finally* design'd for the Glory of Christ in the Salvation of Believers. And once more,

6. IT may be term'd, the Gospel of Christ, as He is the Disposer and Orderer of its *Motions* or Stay here or there, with this or that People, as He pleaseth. At first it was more restrain'd. When Christ sent forth his Apostles, He commanded them, saying,

Matth. x. saying, *Go not into the Way of the Gentiles, and into any City of the Samaritans enter ye not : but go rather to the lost Sheep of the House of Iſrael.*

They, as GOD's ancient People, who pretended at least, to be hoping and waiting for the Kingdom of the *Messiah*, were to have the first Offer. But afterwards the Pale was enlarg'd, and the Partition-Wall between *Jews* and *Gentiles* broken down. *It was necessary* (said St. Paul)

Acts xiii.

46.

that the Word of God should first have been spoken unto you : but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal Life ; Lo, we turn to the Gentiles, for so hath the Lord commanded us. He that requir'd the Word to be first preach'd to the *Jews*, (on which it became necessary it should be so) the same commanded, on their rejecting of it, that it should be preach'd to the *Gentiles*. After the Resurrection of Christ, the Commission was general, allowing and requiring, as far as Opportunity could be had, that the Gospel be preach'd to every human Creature. But yet these Opportunities and Calls for it, are under the Direction and Disposal of Providence. The actual Enjoyment of the Gospel is not universal, but as Christ is pleas'd to send it. 'Tis not from the Deservings of any, more than others, that they have it. Tho' where 'tis bestow'd, 'tis not taken away again without their Forfeiture, and Undeservings. Christ *holds the Stars* (that is, *his Ministers*) in his right Hand, not only for their Safety and Preservation, but also for their Disposal and Mission. He sends out and places these Lights, as He pleases.

Rev. i.

16.

Acts xvi. When St. Paul and his Companions had gone throughout Phrygia and Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia,

6. —xix. 10. (*viz.* at that Time, for afterwards they did)

after

after they were come to Mysia, they essayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffer'd them not. The Journeyings as well as Teachings of Christ's Apostles, were under the Direction of his Spirit. Passing by Mysia, they came to Troas, and there St. Paul in a Vision is invited by one of Macedonia, to come thither, and help them, as accordingly he did, gathering that the Lord had called them to preach the Gospel there. 'Tis true, that Way and Instance of Direction was extraordinary; but we see by it, a Providence there is, in the Disposal of the Gospel, it does not go and come by Chance; that this or that Nation hath it, and another not, is by Christ's Disposal. Children of the Stock of Abraham, whoever among you feareth God, to you (said Paul) is the Word of Salvation sent: The Gospel moves not at Random, or by the mere human Will and Pleasure of the Dispensers of it, but by the Guidance and Direction of the Great Lord and Master. He set up those Lights in the once famous Churches of Asia; but upon Miscarriage and Unprofitableness under them, He threaten'd to remove them. So in the Case of Ephesus, for losing their first Love, He told them, unless they repented, and did their first Works, he would come unto them quickly, and remove their Candlestick out of his Place. i. e. remove the Gospel from them and make them no Church; as was done to them afterward. The Gospel then most fitly and rightfully, is term'd Christ's Gospel, who has the Disposal and Ordering of the Motions of it. And thus of the second Enquiry, Why is the Gospel term'd the Gospel of Christ? He, as God, with the Father and Spirit, is the Author of it; and as God-Man and Mediator, the Plot and Design thereof was laid in him: He first

Acts xiii.

Rev. ii. 5.

first preach'd and publish'd it to the World ; all other Preachers and Publishers of it, are sent out by him ; yea, He is the chief Subject and Matter of the Gospel, all the Lines thereof meet and center in him ; and 'tis his, finally, as the End of it is his and the Father's Glory, which by the Gospel is most manifested and exalted, and his likewise as the Disposer and Orderer of the Motions of it. He, who orders the Clouds, and commands them to rain on this or that Land, and not on another ; He disposes and governs the heavenly Dews of his Word, making them to drop down and water one Country, while others remain as a dry and parch'd Wilderness, without any such Refreshing. Proceed we now, to the

Amos iv.
7.

Q. III. WHEN does the Ministry of the Gospel, come to a People in the Fulness of the Blessing thereof ?

BEFORE the Answer unto this, it must be observ'd, That a Distinction is here imply'd between the Gospel *materially* and in itself consider'd ; and the *Blessing* of that Gospel : And that it is suppos'd, that one of these may be without, or with but little and low Measures, and sometimes with a Fulness of the other.

THESE Romans, to whom the Apostle speaks, had the Gospel among them ; and that accompany'd with some good Degrees of the Blessing ; for he thanks GOD, thro' Jesus Christ, for them all, *That their Faith was spoken of throughout the whole World,* And he saith, *He was persuaded of them, that they were full of all Goodness, filled with all Knowledge ; i. e. that they had considerable Attainments therein,* so

Rom. i. 8.

— xv. 14.

as to be able to admonish one another. But yet, notwithstanding this, he tells them in the Beginning of the Epistle, that he long'd to see them, that he might impart to them some *spi-Rom. i. ritual Gift, to the End that they might be establish-^{11.} ed.* And he writes to them this Epistle, to edify and build them up more in Knowledge and Holiness; and when he should come to them, as he hoped he should shortly, *his Coming, he saith, would be in the Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ: Ut benedictione Dei impleam, saith Occum. one, That I may fill you with the Blessing of God. I shall come in abundantia bonorum spiritualium, Lyan. saith another, in the Abundance of spiritual good Things.* For

Answer to the Question then, THE Ministry of the Gospel, may be said to come in the Fulness of the Blessing thereof, when these Particulars concur, viz. When

1. THE good and holy Aims and Intendments of the Gospel obtain, and have Place in, and with a People.

2. THAT spiritual Good is carry'd to a considerable Height among them. And,

3. WHEN this is extensive, and reaches many, the Generality, at least, in a Place or Congregation.

THESE Things meeting, the Ministry of the Gospel may be said, then and there, to come in the Fulness of the Blessing of it.

1. WHEN the good and holy Aims and Intendments of the Gospel obtain, and have Place in, and with a People.

D

THIS

THIS may be taken either, as to the *Graces and Duties*, or the *Privileges and Benefits* of the Gospel.

(1.) *As to the Graces and Duties of the Gospel*: When it comes to a People, not in Word only, but in Power, so as that, the Spirit of Christ accompanying, it avails and is effectual to its holy Purposes, in the Hearts and Lives of those that hear it. This is included in a Ministry's Coming in the *Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ*. The Gospel has not its Effect merely from its Matter, and the external Discovery and Proposal of it; but as invigorated and made operative by Christ and his Spirit. Alas! how many hear the Gospel from Day to Day, and yet are never the better for it! The Light enters not into their dark and prejudic'd Minds, nor the Love of the Truth into their perverse and disaffected Hearts. The best Preacher, without divine Influence accompanying, can do no Good. *Who is Paul, and who is Apollos,* (saith the Apostle) *but Ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every Man? Paul and Apollos preaching the Gospel, were Means and Instruments, but it was the LORD gave Faith thereby.* Without the Spirit, the Gospel and Word of Life itself, is but a dead Letter. Ministers can do Nothing of themselves, without the Power of Christ going with them; now when there's this, to those good Ends and Effects which the Gospel aims at, there are Steps towards this Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel. As,

1 Cor. iii.
5.

[1.] ILLUMINATION and Conviction, are a primary Business of the Gospel. Said Christ to Paul,

Paul, when he was sending him out to preach it, I send thee to open their Eyes, and to turn them Acts xxvi. *from Darkneß to Light, and from the Power of Sa-* 17, 18. *tan unto God.* A State of Nature is a State of woful Blindneß and Ignorance. We have therein no right Knowledge of GOD, or of ourselves; we see not our Sin, and Misery by Sin, as we should; and much less the Remedy, Christ, and his Righteousness and Spirit. The Work of the Gospel is to teach and to shew us this, to dispel that Darkneß, and bring us into the Light; or rather to bring Light into us, to make us knowing and understanding in the true State of our Case, and the Way of our Recovery out of it. *Ye were Sometimes Darkneß,* Eph. v. 8. *saith the Apostle, (viz. before the Gospel came, or had any good Effect upon them) but now are ye Light in the Lord.* The Scales of Ignorance are fallen off from your Eyes, and a true Sight of Things belonging to your everlasting Peace and Happiness is given; so that it may be said to you, as Christ said to his Disciples, *Blessed* Matth. *are your Eyes, for they see; when others are still* xiii. *in Blindneß, the Gospel has been as Eye-salve to you, that hath healed you. This is the Beginning of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ. As in the first Creation, after the Chaos, Light was made; so is it in this second and new one. And O how pleasant and excellent a Thing is this! As the Light of the Sun, and the Sight of the Eyes, in the natural World; so are Christ, and his Gospel, and the Light of Grace, to a savingly inlighten'd Mind, in the spiritual World. This is Life eternal, saith our Saviour, to know* John xvii. *Thoe, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom* 3. *Thou hast sent: This is the Beginning of it, what tends to it, and will be perfected in it,*

This, then, is one primary Business of the Gospel, and Beginning of the Blessing of it, saving *Illumination and Conviction*. And with it, and arising from it,

[2.] CONTRITION and Humiliation, Self-abasement in the Sight and Sense of our Vileness, by Reason of original, and contracted Guilt, and Defilement. This is Part of the *Blessing of the Gospel*. There is an *Humbling* indeed, that's only the Work of the Law, a forc'd bowing down of the Soul under Guilt and Terrors, no otherwise good, but as it may lead to what is evangelical, which is a willing, chosen Thing; the Soul thro' Grace humbles itself, is not merely humbled, it is active in laying itself low before GOD; it is vile in its own Eyes, blushes to look up to Heaven, only cries, as the poor *Publican*, *God be merciful to me a Sinner*. This is that spiritual Poverty, which our Saviour commends, and puts the first of the *Beatitudes*, as leading to the rest. To this, are the Promises of Favour and Comfort; of GOD's special indwelling Presence now, and of the Kingdom at last. *Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth Eternity, whose Name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy Place, with him also, that is of a contrite and of an humble Spirit, to revive the Spirit of the Humble, and to revive the Heart of the contrite Ones*: These GOD will guide and teach, and bring at last unto Glory. That's another Thing then, the Purpose of the Gospel is to humble, as well as enlighten; and where it comes with a Blessing, it is made effectual, to bow the Will, and soften the Heart, to lay a Person low before GOD, in the Sense of his Distance and Vileness, his Unfitness in himself to have to do with him,

Isa. lvii.
15.

him, or to approach unto him. And farther,

3. *ANOTHER Purpose and Aim of the Gospel, and a great and most special one, is, to work Faith in the Redeemer.* To this, the Discoveries and Commands, the Exhortations and Pleadings of it look, to bring Persons unto Christ, and unite them by Faith to him. *These are written that ye might believe, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God: and that believing, ye might have Life thro' his Name.* This is the End, both of the Word written and preach'd; *Faith comes by Hearing, and Hearing by the Word of God; by the Gospel, that is preach'd and publish'd by those who are sent to that Purpose.* *In whom ye trust-* Eph. i. *ed (i. e. in Christ) after that ye heard the Word of* 13. *Truth, the Gospel of Salvation.* This Word is both the Instrument for working Faith, and what reveals the Matter and Object of it. The full and complete Object is the *whole Revelation of GOD*; the main and principal, are the *Promises of Pardon and Life thro' Christ*; thro' the Word and Promises of it, we believe in Christ for Salvation. Faith is call'd, *Coming to him, Receiving of him, and Trusting in him.* 'Tis sometimes spoken of with relation to the ultimate Object, GOD, and call'd, *Believing him, and Believing in, or, on him*; and sometimes with reference to the immediate Object, CHRIST; both are together in those Words of our Saviour, to his troubled Disciples, *Ye believe in God, believe also in me.* John xiv. You know and trust in the divine Perfections; 1. but that your Faith may be truly comfortable and saving, look on GOD *in and thro' me.* Agreeable is that of St. Peter: speaking of Christ, saith he, *Who was manifest in these last Times* 1 Pet. i. *for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised* 20, 21. *him*

- him up from the Dead, and gave him Glory, that your Faith and Hope might be in God. In GOD ultimately ; and in Christ, the Way unto the Father. This Faith is that of which so much is spoken every where in Scripture, call'd specially and eminently, *The Work of God*. When the Jews enquir'd of Christ, *What they should do to work the Works of God?* This, said he, is the *Work of God*, that ye believe on him whom He hath sent : On himself, that is, the true *Messiah*. This is the Work GOD specially requires, and is pleas'd with : Receiving his Son, resigning to him, and putting ourselves under his Teaching and Conduct. And where the Gospel comes with a Blessing, this it effects ; it works Faith, which, uniting to Christ, is the Beginning and Principle of a new and divine Life. This some take to be the leading Grace, which ushers in all others, or which, in itself, is all
- John vi. 28, 29. virtually. *Received ye the Spirit* (saith the Apostle) *i. e.* the Gifts and Graces of the Spirit, *by the Works of the Law?* no ; that could not be the Means thereof, but *the Hearing of Faith*. By hearing and believing the Gospel, and receiving Christ therein, his Spirit, and the Graces thereof, come to be in you. O inestimable
- Gal. iii. 2. Blessing of the Gospel ! Well is this styl'd, *Precious Faith* ; precious in its Nature, and in its Use and Benefit. This, saith One, is the *punctum saliens* in the New Creature, the first quickening of it, and which hath virtually all Graces in it ; out of this all springs, and this actuates all. Works before, or without Faith, are dead Works ; true and acceptable Obedience is styl'd, *The Obedience of Faith* ; arising from it, as the Principle, as well as directed by the Word as the Rule of Faith : yea, this is not only
- 2 Pet. i. 1. Rom. xvi. 26.

only the great *working*, but the *waiting* and the *combating Grace*; that which bears up the Soul in Expectation of heavenly Glory and Happiness; and helps to conflict with, and withstand all the Enemies of Salvation, even till a complete Victory over them be obtain'd. *This is the Victory that overcometh the World*, saith *St. John* v. *St. John, even your Faith*. This, thro' Christ, is the Means of it. Faith conquers both the World itself, and Satan the God of it. Time would fail to set forth fully the Excellencies of this Grace, and its Uses, in the Christian Life; one and a chief Particular it is in the Design of the Gospel, and which it works, where it comes with a Blessing. And,

[4.] REPENTANCE *also is another*. By mentioning of which after Faith, 'tis not my Meaning to determine about the Order of these Things, only that they are of main Intendment in the Gospel, and Parts of the Blessing of it. In *Time*, the *Principle* and *Habits* of *Grace* may be together, all included in that holy Change that passes upon the Soul in Regeneration and first Conversion. And as to the *acting* and *putting forth of those Principles* and *Graces*, 'tis hard to say which is first, *Faith* or *Repentance*,, they seeming to be imply'd one in the other. For, What is *Faith*, but the Flight of a convinc'd, humbled Sinner unto Christ? where *Repentance* seems supposed and included. And, What is *Repentance*, but an ingenuous Sorrow for Sin, and turning from it unto God, arising from a Sense of the Evil thereof, and Love to God, with Hope in his Mercy thro' a Mediator? Where no such Love and Hope is, there can be no ingenuous Grief; will

will be no abandoning Sin, at least not from any good Principle, nor right turning unto GOD. A *despairing, hopeleß Soul*, will be bound up in Hardness and Impenitency, and sooner fly from GOD, were that possible, or fly out in Rage against him; than touch'd with Love, or affected with ingenuous Shame and Sorrow for Sin, come to him; here is the *Heart of Stone*, not the *Heart of Flesh*. These Things therefore seem imply'd, as was said, one in another; a Sort of *legal Repentance*, or Sorrow for Sin merely on selfish Accounts, as it subjects to Evils and Sufferings here, and for ever. This may be before Faith, from the Work of the Law alone, inforc'd and set home upon the Conscience, by the Spirit of GOD; but *evangelical Repentance*, that which is a true and saving Grace, is not altogether without Faith, but mixt with it, and springing out of it. As to the Matter in hand, therefore, we need not be solicitous about the Order, provided we look to the Being and Truth of the Thing, that this Grace of GOD be in us. One is, indeed, often mention'd before the other, *viz. Repentance before Faith*, possibly as that may first and most observably manifest and shew forth itself in outward Expressions and Effects. But one is not utterly without the other, radically they are together, in one and the same sanctify'd and renew'd Soul. And in their Actings too there is a Kind of a Mixture of one with the other, or at least they go Hand in Hand; and then does the Gospel come with a *Blessing*, when it is effectual hereunto. *The Kingdom of God*, (that is, the Gospel State and Dispensation,) *is at hand*, said Christ, *repent ye and believe the Gospel*. And St. Paul, appealing to the *Ephesine Elders* about his

Mark i.
15.

his Diligence and Faithfulness among them, *Ye* Acts xx. know, says he, *how I kept back Nothing that was* 21. *profitable unto you, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, Repentance towards God, and Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.* These two he makes the Sum, or main Points, at least, of his Preaching. *Then hath God to the Gentiles also* Acts xi. *granted Repentance unto Life;* said the *Jews* unto 18. *Peter.* We are to take, granted, there, not as to the *Means* and *Call* to Repentance only; but the *Grace* and *Work* of it, his Spirit operating with the Gospel to their Conversion, as well as of the *Jews.* Repentance; as well as *Faith*, is GOD's Gift, bestow'd without Distinction of Country or Nation. *If per-* 2 Tim. ii. *adventure God will give them Repentance,* saith 25. the Apostle. Tho' GOD hath in the Gospel made Room for it, laid the Grounds of it, and does call and invite Men to it, using all Manner of Arguments to induce thereto; yet such is the Blindness of Mens Minds, and Hardness of their Hearts, that unless He accompany external Means, with efficacious, internal Influence; unless his Spirit work powerfully in, and by the Word, all will come to Nothing. Now this is the *Blessing of the Gospel*, when GOD does so work by it, as to produce this happy Change, taking away the *Heart of Stone*, and giving an *Heart of Flesh*; soft and tender, relenting and mourning for Sin, and turning from it unto GOD. Something of this was touch'd before; Contrition and Humiliation is a Part of the Blessing of the Gospel, an Ingredient of true Repentance, but this includes more, and goes farther; here is not only a *Remorse for Sin*, and *Grieving for it*, but *Abandoning and Casting it off.* *Godly Sorrow worketh* 2 Cor. vii. *Repen-* 16.

Repentance, saith the Apostle ; the latter is the Effect and Fruit of the former : 'Tis not *Sorrowing after a godly Sort*, which does not work *Repentance to Salvation, not to be repented of*. Worldly Sorrow worketh Death ; but this godly Sorrow, Life and Peace. None ever griev'd for such Grief ; 'tis the Seed of true and everlasting Joy. Here is in this Repentance a Change of *Mind and Life*, as well as *Sorrow and Trouble of Spirit* ; casting off Sin and the Works of Darkness, and turning to GOD and his Laws and Testimonies. *Repenting and Turning* are generally put together in Scripture, and must, and will ever be together in a true Penitent. Turning from *all Sin*, as to the Love and allow'd Practice thereof ; and especially from the formerly *beloved Sin* ; mortifying that in the first place, as that wherein the chief Strength of Sin lies, and which most *easily besets the Soul* : Tho' the whole Body of Sin, with all the Members of it, will be struck at, none spar'd or favour'd, and GOD's Love, and Fear, and Service, is the Term to which this Turning is. Where the Gospel comes *with a Blessing*, this is a great and principal Work of it : *Unto you first*, said St. Peter to the Jews, *God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning every One of you from his Iniquities*. They are a *bless'd People*, indeed, who are a converted People ; and a main Business and Design of Christ in his Coming, in Flesh, and in his Gospel, is to communicate *this Blessing*. The Jews were favour'd with the first Offer ; but they rejecting it, and *judging themselves unworthy of eternal Life*, the same Tender is made to the Gentiles, and where the Gospel comes with Effect, it works this Grace ; than which, what more fit, and agreeable,

Acts iii.
26.

agreeable, and pleasing to GOD, or more profitable to the Sinner? *I have surely heard Ephraim* Jer. xxxi. *bemoaning himself thus* (said GOD) *Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a Bullock unaccustomed to the Yoke.* That's the Temper of a yet unbroken, untam'd Sinner; plunging and struggling under the Hand and Dealings of God; but when Grace comes, and softens the Heart, and puts upon Crying unto GOD, *Turn Thou me, and I shall be turned; for Thou art the Lord my God;* then all is chang'd to meek, humble, godly Mourning. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my Thigh; I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the Reproach of my Youth. Upon which, saith God, *Is Ephraim my dear Son? is he a pleasant Child? since I spake against him, I earnestly remember him still: Therefore my Bowels are troubled for him, I will surely have Mercy on him; saith the Lord.* Is Ephraim chang'd in his Affections and Behaviour towards me? so shall my Dispensation and Carriage toward him be chang'd. Does he repent of his Sin? I also will repent of those Troubles and Afflictions, which I have laid upon him. Happy State of Things, where thus it is! Here is that promised Blessing, *A new Heart will I give you,* Ezek. *and a new Spirit will I put within you: and I will* xxxvi. 26. *take away the stony Heart out of your Flesh, and I will give you an Heart of Flesh.* There's the Root and Principle of this Repentance; and the Workings of it follow: *Then shall you remember* Verse 31, *your own evil Ways, and your Doings that were not good; and shall loath yourselves in your own Sight, for your Iniquities.* Self-loathing, and Self-judging for Sin; Hatred of it, and Aversion from it, and sincere Turning of the Heart to GOD;

mov'd thereto by the Turpitude and Vileness of Sin, as well as the mischievous Effects and Fruits of it to us ; its Contrariety to God, his pure and holy Nature, and righteous Laws ; and from true Love to God, for his Goodness and Excellency in Himself, as well as his Beneficence and Kindness to his poor Creatures ; Casting off Sin, and Turning to God in such Manner, and on such Grounds ; that is the *Repentance* which the Gospel requires, and which it works, where it comes with a Blessing. And further,

[5.] Obedience, and Holiness of Life, is another : For this it prepares, and to this it brings, by those preceding Steps. Inlightening, and humbling, and working Faith in Christ, and Repentance and Turning to God ; all is in order to bring to him, and walk before Him to all Pleasing. Purging the Conscience from dead Works, is to *serve the Living God*. St. Paul in his Preaching shew'd unto *Jews and Gentiles*, that they should repent and turn to God, and *do Works meet for Repentance*. For Want of this, with what Reproach and sharp Reproof were the *Pharisees and Sadducees* rejected by *John*, when they offer'd themselves to his Baptism ? O *Generation of Vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the Wrath to come ? bring forth therefore Fruits meet for Repentance*. As Faith without Works is dead, so is Repentance too, of no Value or Significancy with God, or Truth in itself ; it has not the Nature of evangelical Repentance, if not productive of good Life ; nor is the Design of the Gospel answer'd, if, where there is Time for it, this be not the Fruit. Principles and Habits are for sutable Practice and Action : Graces in the Heart, to put forth them-

Heb. ix.

14.

Matth iii.

7, 8.

themselves in good Works: The barren Tree is
 cursed. St. Paul glories in it, as *the Grace given* Rom. xv.
him by God, that the Gospel ministred by him 17, 18.
was effectual to the sanctifying and offering up of the
Gentiles unto God, and making them obedient.
 And he rejoyces particularly in reference to the
 Romans, *That their Obedience was come abroad un-*—xvi. 19.
to all Men. This will be the greatest Joy and
 Satisfaction to faithful Ministers, to see the Go-
 spel preach'd by them, thus blessed to a Peo-
 ple, so that they become real practical Christi-
 ans, such as *live Religion*, as well as *profess it*;
 according to the ancient Motto, *Non magna lo-*
quimur, sed vivimus. The Gospel is to advance
 the Glory of God in the World, by healing
 the Corruptions of Men, and setting up shining
 Images of himself in it. 'Tis God's Glory that
 He is Good, and does Good; and the Glory of
 Christians to be like Him in both; and of the
 Gospel to effect it. *The Grace of God that bring-* Titus ii.
eth Salvation, hath appeared unto all Men, teach- 11, 12.
ing us, that denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts,
we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this
present World. For this Purpose Christ gave Verse 14.
himself for us, that he might redeem us from all In-
iquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar People, zea-
lous of good Works: Not only doing good Works,
 but having the Heart set for them, and vigorously
 ingaged in them: *Fervent in Spirit, serving the* Rom. xii.
Lord; Here is the Blessing of the Gospel. We 11.
 are not a peculiar People unto Christ without this;
 his must be better, and do more than others;
 their Righteousness must exceed that of the Scribes
 and Pharisees, viz. in the Sincerity, Impartia-
 lity, and Universality of it; they must walk
 in all the Commandments and Ordinances of the
 Lord, blameless. All whom the Apostles were to
 disciple

disciple and baptize, they were to teach to *observe all Things that Christ commanded them*. This therefore is another Thing: Then does the Gospel, and Ministry of it, come *with a Blessing*, when it makes not barely *nominal*, but *real* and *practical* Christians; such as imitate Christ, *walking as he walked*. Again,

Rom. i.
11.

[6.] CONFIRMATION, and Establishment in the Truth, is a further Aim of the Gospel. Not only that it may be *believed* and *embrac'd*, and the good *Ways* of GOD chosen, and enter'd into; but that Christians may be *strengthened* and *settled*; the Roots of Religion and Godliness, striking deep into their Souls, whereby they may be kept from Wavering and Inconstancy, and may not be overthrown, or remov'd by the Winds of Temptation, or Persecution. This, as before was noted, is one Thing specially meant by the Apostle in reference to those *Romans*: *I long to see you, (said he) that I may impart unto you some spiritual Gift, to the End that ye may be established*. The Condition of Christians, in that Day, and especially in such a Place as *Rome*, was full of Difficulty and Danger; they had many Enemies striving to seduce, or to terrify them, one Way or other to overthrow their Faith, and so ruin and destroy their Souls: He coveted, therefore, the Opportunity of being instrumental of their further *Strengthening* and *Confirmation*; that they might be able to withstand all Assaults, and continue in the Faith, *Grounded and settled, and not moved away from the Hope of the Gospel*. The Best have need of this *establishing Grace* of God, both in regard of the Remains of Sin and Corruption within, and the Oppositions they must

must look to meet with from without. For this the Apostle prays, in behalf of the *Colossians*, *That they might be strengthened with all Might, according to God's glorious Power* : With Might in all the Faculties of the Soul, and unto all the Duties and Purposes of Life : *The Mind*, in approving Truth and Goodness, and disapproving Evil : *The Will*, in chusing one, and refusing the other : *The Affections*, in cleaving to God and Christ, and his Service, and casting out what is contrary thereto ; that Patience, Love, Joy, Hope, good Desires, Fear and Reverence of GOD, Hatred of Sin, Contempt of the World, &c. that these may be strengthen'd, according to his glorious Power. In which is signify'd both the efficient Cause of this Strengthening, *The Power of God* ; and the Rule and Measure, that it be *such as his Power is able to work* ; not *simply* and *absolutely*, but as may bear some *Sutableness* to such an Helper, and as He wills, and is ready, by his Gospel, to communicate : Such *Strengthening* the Apostle prays they might have. And this is a great Part of the *Blessing of the Gospel* : When it is made effectual not only to work Grace, but to strengthen that Work, and confirm the Christian in Faith and Holiness ; that he ben't always as a Babe in Christ, or a Novice in Religion ; apt to be seduced and misled, and *carried about with every Wind of Doctrine* ; or impos'd upon and turn'd aside by the Craft of those, who lie in wait to deceive. *We live*, said St. Paul to the *Thessalonians*, *if ye stand fast in the Lord*. This will be mighty comforting and encouraging to us Ministers, as well as of utmost Necessity and Importance to yourselves. Establishment then in the Truth, is one of the great Aims of the

the Gospel, and what it effecteth, where it comes in the Blessing of it : And not only this Confirmation in Grace, already receiv'd ; but ;

[7.] GROWTH and Increase of Grace, is design'd also. These are mention'd together, by St. Peter, but as distinct Duties, and Blessings : For they are both ; as enjoyn'd in the Gospel, they are Duties ; and as wrought and effected in us by it, thro' the Spirit, so they are Blessings.

2 Pet. iii. Beware, saith the Apostle, *lest ye also, being led*
 17, 18. *away with the Error of the Wicked, fall from your own Steadfastness ; but grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* He had been warning of Scoffers, and Atheists, that would arise in the latter Days, mocking at the Hope and Piety of serious, godly Christians, and even ridiculing the Doctrine of the Coming of Christ, and a future Judgment : Now, saith he, *seeing ye know these Things before, beware lest you be seduced, and fall from your Steadfastness.* The best, by reason of remaining Corruptions, and the ensnaring Subtilties of the Devil, are not without Danger ; and tho' their Keeping be of God, yet He expects, that in order to it, they use their own Endeavours, and watch against Declension ; and that instead of going backward, and falling away, they *grow in Grace, and the Knowledge of Christ.* This will keep from falling, as it is directly contrary to it ; and by Growth, the Habits and Principles of Grace and Holiness get more Strength, and are more confirm'd. And thus is Increase of Grace, a Blessing of the Gospel, as it is a Means unto other Blessings, that great one especially, viz. Establishment in Grace, and Preservation from Apostacy ; but a Blessing
 jr

it is too in itself, than which what can be greater? For *Grace* is the most excellent Thing, the very Image and Likeness of God, a divine Nature; that which fits for Communion with God, and acceptable serving of him; which makes a Person the Object of His Delight, and disposes reciprocally to delight in him, as the chief Good, and highest Happiness. *Cor. xli.*
earnestly the best Gifts; (saith the Apostle) yet shew I unto you a more excellent Way. Gifts, especially those which make for the edifying the Church, as *Prophecy*, and the like, are very desirable and useful: but he lets them know, there was somewhat far transcending these, *viz. Grace and Holiness*, the true Love of God, and our Neighbour; this adorns, and makes *the Face to shine*. Gifts furnish for divers Purposes, and God may use them for Good to others; yet without *Grace* they'll be nothing profitable to the Possessors themselves. 'Tis Holiness that gives true Honour, and is the best Riches: Of which may be said (what the Philosopher said of Time) *Honesta est Seneca.*
Pietatis avaritia. Here is an *honest Covetousness*, without Danger of exceeding, and the Business of the Gospel, and of the Ministry thereof, is not only to begin, but to advance and heighten this all that may be; 'tis for *Perfecting the Saints, and edifying the Body of Christ.* *Eph. iv.*
I commend you to God, and to the Word of his Grace, *Acts xx.*
(saith St. Paul to the Ephesine Elders) which is able to build you up, and give you an Inheritance among all them that are sanctify'd; i. e. to carry on the Work of God's Grace in you, till you are made meet for, and brought unto Heaven. The Gospel is not only sufficient, but the appointed Means for this, and what does so, where it

¹ Pet. ii. 2. comes with a Blessing. Whence we are bid, *As new-born Babes, to desire the sincere Milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby.* This is a growing State, we come not to our full Stature in Christ, till we come to Heaven; and all the Way the Gospel is the Means of Proficiency. The Holy Spirit descends with his Influences and Irrigations, and makes the Souls of good Men flourishing and fruitful. It was a Prophecy and Promise, eminently to be fulfill'd in Gospel

Isa. xlv 3. Times, what is spoken by *Isaiab: I will pour Water upon him that is thirsty, and Floods upon the dry Ground; and my Blessing upon thine Off-spring; and they shall spring up among the Grass, as Willows by the Water Courses.* Willows planted by Waters, as they use to be, thrive much: And so do Souls under the Gospel, when it comes in the

Psal. xcii. 12. Blessing of it. In the *Psalms* there is another Comparison not unlike to this: *The Righteous shall flourish like the Palm-Tree, he shall grow like the Cedar in Lebanon.* The Palm is noted for its flourishing Nature, a Tree that's always Green, and shoots up, tho' Weights be hung on it: And the Cedar, especially those of *Lebanon*, are remark'd for their Loftiness, and spreading wide their Branches: To these, is the flourishing State of those compar'd, who enjoy the Gospel, and have it blessed to them. So it follows, *Those that are planted in the House of the Lord, shall flourish in the Courts of our God.* Elsewhere, *I will be as the Dew unto Israel, (says God) he shall grow as the Lilly, and cast forth his Roots as Lebanon.* The Prophet heaps up Metaphors, to shew the prosperous State of the Church and the Members thereof, when they return to God: He blesses his Word and Ordinances to them, they then thrive in Grace. *They shall revive as the*
Corn,

Corn, and grow as the Vine, (as he there adds) which is noted for its spreading Nature. And thus of this Particular. Once more,

[8.] PERSEVERANCE in Grace and Goodness to the End, is the Upshot of the Gospel Intent, and what it stops not short of, where it comes with a Blessing. This, together with the former, the Apostle made his great Prayer for the *Theſſalians*: The very God of Peace (says he) sanctify ^{1 Theſſ. v.} you wholly, i. e. carry on his Work of Grace in ^{23, 24.} you, sanctifying you more and more, in all your Powers and Faculties, till his Work be complete in you. There's what concerns their Growth in Grace, and intire Sanctification; to which he adds, *And I pray God, your whole Spirit, and Soul, and Body be preserved blameless, unto the Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.* There's a twofold Coming of Christ, viz. Particular and special, to every One by Death; and a more publick and visible Coming, unto all at the last and great Day of Judgment. They who are ready and prepar'd for that special and particular Coming, will not be confounded at the other; for Preparation whereto, the Apostle petitions, and it is what, by the Gospel and the Blessing of it, is secur'd to holy Persons, as there it follows, *Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.* Christ himself pray'd for this, in Behalf of his sincere Followers, and therefore such may comfortably hope for, and expect it; for *the Father heareth him always*: ^{John xvii.} Holy Father, keep thro' thine own Name, i. e. by ^{11.} thy Power and Grace, those whom Thou hast given me. And what Kind of Keeping he beg'd, afterwards is shewn: *I pray not, that Thou shouldst take them out of the World; but that Thou shouldst* ^{Ver. 15.}

keep them from the Evil. Preservation in Grace and Holiness, is the Thing requested ; and this, not for those Saints only that were present in his Time, but for all Believers that should be in succeeding Ages: Neither pray I (said he) for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me thro' their Word. By the Gospel's Coming with a Blessing, this Prayer of Christ hath its Effect. For when we speak of the Power of GOD keeping and preserving of any, it is not meant that it does it in an immediate Way, as He keeps the Angels, but by the Word and his Blessing on it: by this He waters, and keeps alive the Plants of Righteousness: He confirms his unto the End, He builds them up, even till they come to the Inheritance among all them that are sanctified, having begun a good Work in them, He performs it unto the Day of the Lord Jesus. This, where the Gospel comes with its Blessing, will be. Whence 'tis call'd the Gospel of Life, and of Salvation, not only as revealing and offering it, and working the Beginnings, and more and more advancing it in the Soul; but bringing to eternal Life at last in Heaven, exciting and enabling Persons while here, to persevere in Grace and Holiness, till coming to the End of their Days, they come to the End of their Faith, the Salvation of their Souls. And thus, as to Graces and Duties, a Ministry's Coming to a People in the Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ, imports having Effect and Success to such Purposes as these, viz. To enlighten; to humble; to bring to saving Faith in Christ; to work Repentance, in both its Parts, Sorrow for Sin; and Turning unto God; to produce sincere Obedience; and establish in the Truth; to cause Growth in Grace, and Fruitfulness in good

John xxii.
20.

Phil. i. 6.

good Works ; and Perseverance unto the End. And,

(2.) *THIS Blessing of the Gospel may be consider'd, Serm. II. as to Benefits and Privileges, as well as with Reference to Graces and Duties. And then does a Ministry come to a People in this Blessing of the Gospel, when it is successful and available to intitle to, and instate in, its precious and excellent Benefits, &c. As, to name some of the principal,*

[1.] JUSTIFICATION. The Gospel working Faith in Christ, and uniting unto him, gives Interest in his Merit and Righteousness, and Pardon and Acceptance with GOD thereby. There could be no such Thing as *Justification* and *Pardon* but thro' the Gospel, this reveals the Way, works the Qualifications, and so instates in the Privileges. The Law is the *Ministration of Death and Condemnation*. By the Gospel, and Christ in it, is *Pardon and Life*. And O inestimable Benefit ! to have all Sins blotted out, GOD reconciled and at Peace with us ; to be taken into his Favour, and look'd on, and dealt with, as righteous ; yea, to be intitled to a better Good, a richer and more glorious Inheritance, than that which was forfeited and lost by the Fall ; and to hold it too by a better and surer Tenure, viz. in Capite, in Christ our Head ! Therefore it is of Faith, (saith the Rom. iv. Apostle, not by the Works of the Law) to the End 16. the Promise might be sure to all the Seed. Then does the Gospel come with a Blessing indeed, when it avails to this ; of Children of Wrath makes us Sons of God's Love ; of Heirs of Hell, to be Heirs of God, and Joynt-heirs with Christ. This is the Case of justify'd Persons, not only are they freed from the Curse and Obligation unto

Rom. viii. unto Punishment, *There is no Condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus*; but they are taken into special Favour, have a Right to Heaven and Happiness: Who can express the Greatness of this Privilege? The *Psalmist* proclaims it in
 1. *Psal. xxxii. emphatical Terms: Blessed is he whose Transgression is forgiven, whose Sin is covered; blessed is the Man unto whom the Lord imputeth not Iniquity.*
 1, 2. *Blessednesses*, it is in the abstract, and plural, importing both the Truth and Greatness, even the Perfection of Happiness carry'd therein. Such an One is blessed indeed, and cumulatively so, with all Manner of Blessings. Both privative, and positive, freed from Evil, and intitled to all Good. He has God for his God; and having Him for his; he has in him all that can be wish'd, or needed. Then does the Ministry come with a Blessing, therefore, when working Faith, and uniting unto Christ, it instates in this great Privilege *Justification*. And,

[2.] WHEN it confers *Adoption*, which followeth upon, or accompanies Pardon and Justification. *As many as received him (i. e. Christ) to them gave he Power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his Name: Thro' the Gospel revealing and tendering Christ, as a Saviour, and instrumentally working Faith in him, and thereby uniting to him; thro' this comes this great Privilege. By Union with the natural and eternally begotten Son of God, we come to be his adopted Sons; for 'tis in Christ, that God is reconcil'd, his Law and his Justice being satisfy'd, and the Honour of his Government salv'd. And the Scripture lets us know, it was with this Aim, that Christ did satisfy the Law: When the Fulness of Time was*
come,

come, God sent forth his Son, made of a Woman, Gal. iv.
 made under the Law, to redeem them that are under ^{4, 5.}
 the Law; that we might receive the Adoption of Sons.
 Christ; took away that Hand-writing that was
 against us, nailing it to his Cross, that so, this
 Bar being remov'd, they, who by it were set at
 a Distance, might be brought nigh; even so nigh
 as, upon believing, to be made the Children of
 God. *Ye are all the Children of God, by Faith in Je-* —iii. 26.
sus Christ, saith the Apostle. What Dignity and
 Favour is this! St. *John* speaks of it, as well he
 might, with greatest Wonder: *Behold, what*
Manner of Love the Father hath bestowed upon us,
that we should be called the Sons of God! i. e. that
we should be made, accepted and own'd as his
Sons, and dealt with in all Respects accordingly.
 That Persons so mean, and unworthy in them-
 selves, should be so privileg'd, how amazing! To
 have taken Angels, had been a nearer Step; they
 originally were of those *Morning Stars*, that sang
 the earliest Praises of the Great Creator; to
 have restor'd and rais'd them, would seem not to
 have been so low a Stoop. But to pass them by,
 and thus exalt Man, how wonderful is it! Such
 may go to GOD as a Father, have the Liberty
 of his House and of his Table; yea, not only the
 outward Liberty of Leave, but the inward of
 Inclination, the Spirit and Frame of Children,
 accompanies the Relation. *Because ye are Sons,* Gal. iv. 6.
God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your
Hearts, crying Abba, Father. Slavish Fear is done
 away, at least, as to the Prevalency of it; for
where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty 2 Cor. iii.
 How sweet, how excellent a Thing is this! to ^{17.}
 have Leave, and an Heart to come to GOD,
 and enjoy Communion with him, as his very
 Sons and Daughters! For divine Adoption is not
 a mere

- a mere outward Privilege, or Relation, but carries with it a Nature agreeable. In civil Adoption, among Men, it is not so ; this gives Title, and civil Rights, but carries not with it any inward Change of Likeness in the *adopted*, to him that *adopts* ; these may be of very different, perhaps contrary, Dispositions ; at least may so prove : But there 'tis otherwise,
- Isa. i. 12. they are *born of God*, who have *Power given them*
 13. *to become the Sons of God*. Among Men none can be adopted, and yet begotten Sons too * ; but with God it is not, cannot be otherwise ; none are taken into the Relation, but such as have the Nature of Children, Qualities whereby they resemble their heavenly Father. They are separated from Sin and Impurity, and made holy sanctify'd Persons, and so God takes and owns them as his, is not asham'd to be call'd their
- 2 Cor. vi. God, and Father : *Come out from among them, and*
 17, 18. *be ye separate, saith the Lord, and I will receive you, and will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my Sons and Daughters, saith the Lord Almighty*. This which his Word commands, his Grace effects. He makes those whom He adopts, really to be such holy sanctified Ones, and then loves and cares, and provides for them as his ; he watches over them as a Father, defends them from Hurt and Mischief, takes their Part against Enemies, such as would any way injure them ; He re-
- Psal. cv. *bukes Kings for their Sakes, they who touch*
 14. *them, touch the Apple of his Eye*. They may
- Zach. ii. 8. be assur'd of all needful Protection, and Provision too ; whoever wants, they shall not ; their

* Take it of *begotten Sons* yet under the Power of the Parent ; for if emancipated, and become *sui juris*, Civilians allow such may be adopted, they standing then on the common Foot with others, and the Blood or natural Relation not regarded.

Bread shall be given them, and their Water shall be sure. Whatever their heavenly Father sees ^{16.} *Isa. xxxiii.*

needful for their Support and Comfort, during their Pilgrimage in this World, they may depend upon him for ; and He that has that Care and Consideration, as to the outward and bodily Wants of his Children, to be sure has not less, but rather more Regard to their Souls. They shall have his Word, and Ordinances, and a Blessing with them ; G O D will counsel and teach them, give them the Instructions of a Father ; they shall know his Mind and Will, and when they wander, *shall hear the Voice behind them, saying, This is the Way, walk in it.* They shall not ^{21.} *Isa. xxx.*

be left to any damnable, destructive Errors : And if need require, G O D will chasten them as a Father too. *If his Children forsake his Law, and walk not in his Judgments, &c. He will* ^{30, &c.} *Ps. lxxxix.*

visit their Transgressions with the Rod, and their Iniquity with Stripes : tho' his Loving-kindness he will not utterly take from him, nor suffer his Faithfulness to fail. This, in its Place, and due Circumstances, is as much the Part of a Father, as those others of Protection and Provision ; not to suffer Children to run wild and loose, defiling themselves with Sin, and corrupting their Manners. *He that spares the Rod, (when necessary)* ^{Prov. xiii.} *bates his Son : but he that loveth him, chasteneth* ^{24.}

him betimes. G O D will not be wanting in this to his Children, and that, because they are his Children, those whose Good he specially has at Heart, and concerns himself for. The *Fathers of the Flesh* correct their Children, and so will the *Father of Spirits* his ; and that without the Mixture of Infirmary, that often is in the Dealings of the former : *They, after their own Pleasure, irregular many times ; but He for our*

G

Profit,

- Profit, that we might be Partakers of his Holiness.*
 This Father is not rigorous and severe, or unmerciful in his Dealings ; but tho' He chastens as a Father, He spares as a Father also : *I will spare them, (saith he) as a Man spareth his own Son that serveth him.* He will shew all paternal Affection, and Indulgence, to them ; He will pity their Infirmities, put the best Construction on their Failings, and accept their sincere, tho' weak and imperfect Services. Thus will GOD carry toward them, while here in their Minority, and weak State ; and at last, when his Grace has made 'em ripe, and fit for Heaven, He will bring them to it, and put them in Possession of that glorious Inheritance, which they were born and adopted to. *Blessed be the God, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (saith the Apostle) which according to his abundant Mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively Hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead, to an Inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you.* This Inheritance, which they are begotten again to, and is reserv'd for them, their heavenly Father will, when they are meet for it, bring them to, and instate them in ; a *lively Hope* whereof is wrought in them now, which they may rejoyce in, and bless GOD for, as St. Peter does : But full and everlasting Possession will be given them by their Father, when He takes 'em hence ; the Greatness and Excellence of which Portion of theirs, we can now have no adequate Conceptions of. *Now are we the Sons of God ; (saith St. John) but it doth not yet appear what we shall be :* What the full Happiness and Benefit of this Sonship is, all the Riches and Glory, the Felicity and Dignity that is carry'd in it, or which it draws after it, appear not now ; only this
- Mal. iii. 17.
- 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.
- 1 John iii. 2.

this at present we know, That *when he*, i. e. Col. iii. 4. Christ, shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. We shall appear with him in Glory, saith St. Paul. Thus then it is, where a Ministry comes in the Blessing of the Gospel, it not only works the Graces before-mention'd, but bestows these excellent Privileges, Justification, and Pardon of Sin; and Adoption into the Number of GOD's Children: To which add

[3.] THE Gift of the Holy Spirit, to dwell in the Hearts of Believers. Thro' the Gospel they come into Relation to all the Persons in the ever-blessed Trinity, to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. And this Relation is not merely titular, and nominal, but in order to the greatest Purposes; as the Father is in Scripture represented as the Author and Contriver of the wonderful Work of Redemption, the Son as the Procurer and Purchaser of it, so is the whole Work of applying and perfecting it in the Hand of the Spirit; he from Christ and the Father, and thro' Christ's Merit and Intercession, frames and fits Souls for divine Inhabitation, makes them Temples unto GOD, and then dwells, and is the Principle of all holy Motions and Operations in them. The Scripture speaks much of the Necessity and Truth, the Importance and Benefit of this Gift: *If any have not the Spirit of Rom. viii, Christ, he is none of his.* This is *Proprium quarto modo*, as the Logicians speak, what agrees to all sincere Christians, and only unto such. Here-¹ John iv. *by we know that we dwell in God, and He in us,*^{13.} *because He hath given us of his Spirit.* This was promised to be the great Blessing of Gospel Times, some Scatterings of it there were before, but comparatively on Few, and in lesser Measure,

fure ; as a Dew, rather than a plentiful Rain :
 But now under the Gospel, it was to be poured
 Acts ii. 16. forth upon all Flesh, according to what had been
 17. &c. prophesy'd by Joel, which is apply'd by St. Peter
 to that Effusion on the Day of Pentecost.
 When Christ in his personal Ministry, was calling
 and encouraging poor Sinners to come to
 him, from the Abundance of Comfort and Grace
 which they should find, *This he spake*, (saith St.
 John vii. 39. *John*) *of the Spirit which they that believe on him,*
should receive ; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given,
because that Jesus was not yet glorified. After the
 Death, and Resurrection, and Ascension of
 Christ, that Promise was to have its most full,
 and open, and signal Accomplishment. With re-
 spect to which, said Christ to his Disciples, *It is*
 —xvi. 7. *expedient for you, that I go away ; for if I go not away*
the Comforter (Advocate, or Instructor, it may
 be render'd by any of those Words) *will not come*
unto you ; but if I depart, I will send him unto you :
and when he is come, he will convince the World of
Sin ; but you, my Disciples and Followers, he
will guide into all necessary Truth, he shall re-
ceive of mine, and shew it unto you. The Spirit
 is Christ's great Agent, carrying on the Designs
 of his Love and Grace in, and towards all his
 Members : This supplies his bodily Presence,
 and is of more Advantage than that barely would
 have been : Therefore, said he, *It is expedient*
for you, that I go away. The Spirit is a constant
 residing Sanctifier and Comforter, intimately
 present, and working in the Souls of Believers,
 thro' the Gospel ; this is the Chancel wherein
 he comes, and the Instrument and Means by
 which he operates, whence it is eminently call'd,
 2 Cor. iii. 8. *The Ministration of the Spirit.* We may say of it
 with respect to the Person, as well as to his Gifts
 and

and Graces, *Received ye the Spirit by the Works of the Law, or by the Hearing of Faith?* Thro' the Gospel it is, not the Law, that the Holy Spirit comes unto any: And O how comprehensive, how great, and excellent a Blessing, and Gift is this! Giving it to them that ask, signifies summarily, Giving all good Things, or at least, the best and choicest, what's of most Use and Profit to the Receivers; this is the Bond of Union with Christ, *He that is joyned to the Lord, is one Spirit*; all Grace and Peace, Strength and Assistance is by him. It is the Spirit that guides and teaches, and leads in the Way everlasting: *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, are the Sons of God.* This helps to profit by Ordinances and Providences; makes fruitful in all good Works; cheers and refreshes, supports and upholds in God's Ways and Service; witnesses to the good Estate; fills sometimes with Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory; and seals to the Day of Redemption. The good Fruits and Effects hereof, are so various and admirable, as cannot soon or easily be enumerated and set forth. The Gift of the Holy Spirit to dwell in the Hearts of Believers, then, is well instanc'd, as a great Blessing of the Gospel. One Thing more may be reckon'd also, viz.

Luke xi.
13. Com-
par'd with
Matt. vii.
11.

Rom. viii.
14.

[4.] A BLESSING *there is in the Gospel with Reference to outward Good and Evil*, directing and helping to a Frame and Carriage becoming every Condition. *In all Things I am instructed*, (said the Apostle) *both to be full, and to be hungry; to abound, and to suffer Need: I can do all Things thro' Christ, which strengtheneth me: I have learned in whatsoever State I am, therewith to be content.* O happy Disposition and Posture of Soul,

Soul, and great Blessing of the Gospel ! talk'd and boasted of sometimes by Philosophers, but effectually learn'd and experienc'd only by true Christians. By the Gospel *Institution* and *Blessing* it is that any have attain'd an equal, compos'd Temper of *Mind* and *Heart*, in Variety of Circumstances ; not elated and puffed up with the Good, nor inordinately dejected and sunk with the Evil of this World ; not abusing Prosperity and Fulness, to Pride, Wantonness or Luxury, forgetting GOD, and making those Things Incentives of Lusts, which should be Helps and Motives to holy Obedience ; nor perverted and turn'd off from Piety and Religion by Adversity, questioning whether there be a GOD or Providence, or murmuring against him, and charging him foolishly, as if he were not just, but dealt too hardly with them. Our blessed Saviour, having told his Disciples what they must look for from an evil World, saith *In your Patience possess ye your Souls : YOUR PATIENCE*, that which is proper to you as Christians, which you are taught and help'd to by the Gospel, which keeps both the good State and Temper of the Soul, that it be not lost and undone by *Apostacy*, nor ruffled and discompos'd, and so unfitted for *Service* and *Duty* in any Danger or Difficulty. This is a Gospel *Blessing*, not to succumb, but to bear up upon right *Principles* and *Considerations*, under all Hardships and Sufferings ; to have Losses and Crosses sanctified, and turn'd to spiritual *Gain* and *Profit*, and

Rom. viii. *All work together for Good* (as is promis'd to them that love God, and who are the Called according to his Purpose,) by Trust in God, and Dependance on Him for Supply of *Good*, as well as Safety from *Evil* ; to have the Mind easy, and freed from
anxious,

anxious, disturbing Cares and Fears, about such Things ; as also to see and taste the *Love* and *Goodness* of *GOD*, in what is enjoy'd, and have his *Blessing* therewith ; which will make the *Lit- Pf. xxxvii.* *tle that a righteous Man hath, to be better than the 16.* *Riches of many Wicked.* Thus of the first Branch of the *Answer*, to the third *Query*, *When a Ministry comes to a People in the Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ ? viz.* When the Aims and Intendments of it have Effect among a People in Reference to *Graces and Duties*, and also to *Privileges and Benefits* ; spiritual chiefly, yet not excluding what relates to outward Good and Evil. Another Branch of the *Answer* is,

2. WHEN those Aims and Intendments, with their good Effects, are carry'd to a considerable Heights. As when Persons, thro' the Gospel, are made very knowing and understanding in the Things of *GOD* ; full of Piety and Goodness, and abounding in the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit, and Fruits of Righteousness ; when they are eminent and excelling in Meekness, Patience, Self-denial, Diligence and Faithfulness in their Places and Callings ; when they are zealous of good Works, and fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord ; in a Word, When they lead very holy and exemplary Lives, shining as Lights in a dark World, and shewing forth (in a conspicuous Manner, and exalted Degree) the Praises of him, who hath call'd them out of Darkness, into his marvellous Light : To such, the Ministry of the Word hath come, with some good Measure and Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ. For it may be observ'd, It is not a strict, absolute Fulness, that is necessarily meant ; all the spiritual Improvement that the Gospel could possibly, by the Power

- Power of GOD, raise them to ; but considerable Increases and Additions to what already they had attain'd : For himself had said before of them, *He was persuaded, they were full of all Goodness, filled with all Knowledge ; and yet he long'd to see them, that he might impart to them some spiritual Gift.* Their Fulness therefore, was not such, to which more could not be added ; but a considerable and very laudable Measure, according to the Time and Means they had enjoy'd ; tho' they might, and it was his Desire and Endeavour they should, be making Progress still ; and should GOD favour his Wishes, to come personally to them, he hoped and believed, it would be highly to their Profit : As God had plentifully furnish'd him with ministerial Gifts and Graces, making him a fit Instrument for promoting the Ends of the Gospel among them ; so the Event of his Coming, thro' the Blessing of GOD, he hoped and expected would be answerable. Easy were it to shew, that *full and Fulness* in Scripture, whether as to Bad or Good, is taken for *Abundance*. O *full of all Subtilty, and all Mischief*, said Paul to Elymas, i. e. subtil and mischievous, in a very high and extraordinary Degree ; not that he could be no more wicked than he was. *Dorcas* is said to have been *full of good Works*, i. e. She abounded in them. Thus therefore does a Ministry come in the *Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ*, when the good Ends of it are reach'd in a very great and plentiful Measure. To this Purpose, the Apostle prays for these Romans, That God would *fill them with all Joy and Peace in believing*, and that they might *abound in Hope, thro' the Power of the Holy Ghost* : and thanks God for the *Thessalonians*, That their *Faith grew exceedingly, and the Charity of every one* of
- 1 Cor. i.
14.
—i. 11.
- Acts xiii.
10.
- Rom xv.
13.
2 Thess. i.
3.

of them all towards each other abounded. So that the Apostles gloried of them in the Churches of GOD, for their *Patience and Faith in all their Persecutions and Tribulations, that they endured.* They were eminent for passive, as well as active Obedience and Graces. Both are thro' the Gospel, and the Blessing of it. *To you it is given in Be-* Phil. i. 29. *half of Christ, not only to believe on him, but to suffer for his Sake,* said St. Paul to the Philippians. To the Corinthians likewise, he takes notice, with Thankfulness, of the rich Fruit of the Gospel among them: *That they came behind in no Gift,* 1 Cor. i. *they had all Knowledge, and all Utterance,* i. e. 4, &c. Ability and Readiness to communicate it for the Good of the Church, and Edification of one another. The same Apostle pray'd for the Ephesians, *That God would grant them, according to the* Eph. iii. *Riches of his Glory, to be strengthened with Might* 16. &c. *by his Spirit in the inner Man, that Christ might dwell in their Hearts by Faith; that being rooted and grounded in Love, they might be able to comprehend with all Saints what is the Breadth and Length, and Depth and Height, and to know the Love of Christ, which passeth Knowledge; and that they might be filled with all the Fulness of God.* We cannot know the Love of Christ fully and adequately; but know more of it, than commonly we do, we may and should: For this the Gospel is design'd, *That we may grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our* 2 Pet. iii. *Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; that we may have* 18. *rich Measures thereof.* This is therefore the Apostle's Meaning, that the Ephesians might have such Knowledge thereof, as would be most for their Comfort and Usefulness, and God's Glory; as much as might be fit and attainable in this State; and that they might be *filled with all the Fulness of God.* Not such a Fulness as is in

GOD Himself ; that is Infinite, and not to be reach'd by a Creature ; but such a Fulness of all communicable Good, as Creatures in such a State as ours is, in this World, are receptive of : The Fulness of a *Vessel*, tho' not of a *Fountain*.

Coloss. i.
9, 10, 11.

We do not cease to pray for you, (said he to the Colossians) and to desire that you might be filled with all the Knowledge of his Will, in all Wisdom and spiritual Understanding, that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all Pleasing, being fruitful in every good Work, and increasing in the Knowledge of God : A Scripture greatly expressive of the Matter in hand. Such a Prayer answer'd, would speak the Ministry there, coming in the Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ : When Persons are Filled with the Knowledge of God's Will, such a Fulness as their Capacities can take in, and in some good Degree, suiting the Time, and Means, and Helps afforded, the Places and Stations they are in, and the Work and Duty incumbent on them, or the Trials they may be put to. And this Knowledge is with all Wisdom and spiritual Understanding, i. e. holy Judgment and Discretion, teaching to use Knowledge aright, taking the best Season, the proper Order and Method of Duties, according to their true Importance and Weight so as to give them their right Place and Measure in our Regards, and practically to act and behave accordingly : Walking worthy of the Lord unto all Pleasing, being fruitful in every good Work. Herein is my Father glorified (said Christ) that ye bring forth much Fruit. And increasing in the Knowledge of Christ : This useful practical Knowledge, not declining, or standing at a Stay, but advancing more and more in it. Strengthened with all Might, according

John xv.
8.

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ing to his glorious Power, unto all Patience with Joyfulness. The most improv'd Christian needs the Power of GOD to strengthen the Things that are wrought in him, and help him in doing and suffering the Will of GOD, that he may hold out in both, with a joyful Spirit unto the End. Here does the Ministry come in the Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ, when those great and glorious Aims of the Gospel are not only attain'd in some Measure, but carry'd to an eminent Height. Giving all Diligence, ² Pet. i. 4, (said St. Peter, in his last Advice to Christians) 8. add to your Faith Vertue, and to Vertue Knowledge, and to Knowledge Temperance, and to Temperance Patience, and to Patience Godliness, and to Godliness Brotherly-kindness, and to Brotherly-kindness Charity; for if these Things are in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful, in the Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ: They make it appear, that you are lively and fruitful Christians, indeed, such to whom the Gospel hath come with a full Blessing; who will thereupon Ver. 11. have, at last, Entrance ministred abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour. And add to these, The Ministry's Coming in the Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ, is,

3. WHEN these blessed Effects of it are extensive and reach unto Many. 'Tis a Church the Apostle writes to, and the Ministry could not be said to come to such a Society, with a Fulness of the Gospel-Blessing, if it reach'd but to one, or two, or a few in it. He speaks to the Generality, To all that be at Rome, beloved of God, Rom. i. 7, called to be Saints: I thank my God, thro' Jesus 8. Christ for you all, that your Faith is spoken of throughout the World. The same Apostle, speak-

- 1 Cor. xvi. ing of his Preaching at *Ephesus*, says, *A great*
 9 compar'd *Door and effectual is opened unto me*: Which
 with Rev. is interpreted of the great Successfulness of his
 iii. 8. Ministry in that Place, tho' there were *many*
Adversaries that oppos'd him. He had much
 Liberty in his own Spirit, to speak the Word
 with Boldness, that was a *Door of Utterance*; and
 it had free Access to the Hearts of Many, that
 was a *Door of Entrance*, for the Confirmation
 and Establishment of those that believ'd, and
 promoting the Work of Grace in them, and
 adding Many to their Number by Conversion.
- A^{cts} xix. The Word of G O D there *grew mightily and pre-*
 20. *vailed*. Three thousand Souls in one Day were
 A^{cts} ii. brought to embrace Christianity, at the Preach-
 41. ing of *Peter*, and those advanc'd soon to five thou-
 Chap. iv. sand, if that be not a distinct Account of so ma-
 4. ny more converted at another Sermon. When
 they that were scatter'd abroad in the Persecu-
 tion that arose about *Stephen*, travell'd to *Phe-*
nice, and *Cyprus*, and *Antioch*, preaching the Lord
 J E S U S, the *Hand of the Lord was with them*, and
 a great Number believed, and turned to the Lord.
 And when *Barnabas* was sent to confirm some of
 these, when he came to *Antioch*, and had seen
 the Grace of God, viz. in the great and happy
 Effects of it, he was glad, and exhorted them all,
 A^{cts} xi. with full Purpose of Heart, to cleave unto the Lord;
 21. &c. for he was a good Man and full of the Holy Ghost
 and of Faith, and much People was added unto the
 Lord: Here was a great Blessing accompanying
Barnabas's Ministry, making it effectual to the
 Strengthening and Confirmation of the Con-
 verted, and for bringing in *Many more*. Of St.
 Paul, and the same *Barnabas*, we are farther
 Chap. xiv. told, That at *Iconium*, they went both into the
 1. Synagogue of the Jews, and so spake that a great
 Multi-

Multitude both of the Jews; and also of the Greeks believed. When at Corinth the Word was rejected by the Jews; it succeeded among the Gentiles; Many of the Corinthians bearing, believed, and were baptized. And Christ encourag'd the Apostle in a Vision to go on with his Work, and not fear: For (saith he) I am with thee, and no Man shall set on thee to hurt thee, for I have much People in this City. He had much for the Word to do, in converting and building up many Souls in that Place, and therefore he would not have his Apostle fear, or flinch from his Duty; but go on, giving him to expect his Ministry there should have a full and plenteous Blessing. When the Word is mighty to the pulling down of the strong Holds of Sin and Satan in Many, and setting up the Kingdom of Christ in their Souls, and maintaining and strengthening it, and enlarging it still more and more; here it comes with a full Blessing. And thus for Answer to that third Enquiry, When comes the Ministry to a People in the Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ? When the Aims and Intendments of the Gospel have a good Effect among them; when that Effect is carry'd to a considerable Height; and when this is extensive, and reaches wide, Many are brought in and built up, and the Church and Kingdom of CHRIST is enlarg'd, and those who are in it, are greatly improv'd in Knowledge and all Goodness. Come we now to the

Q. IV. How appears the Happiness of this?
And, For

A. I. IT makes much for the Honour of God,
viz.

(I.) As

- (1.) *As best answering his Calls and Expectations.* The Ends of his Gospel, and of the Ministry of it, are herein most fully reach'd, and his Institution comply'd with; which must be for his Glory: Obedience is the best Way of glorifying God. Now where a Ministry comes with this Effect, there is God most and best obey'd: The Thing itself, *viz.* complying with, and answering the Gospel Institution, in such Manner, is the highest and greatest Expression of Obedience; and is follow'd with most of a dutiful Frame and Life, a Course of strictest and exactest serving of God; and bringing forth the Fruits of Obedience to him, by which He is glorify'd. *Herein is my Father glorify'd, (saith Christ) that ye bear much Fruit, so shall ye be my Disciples:* So shall you most clearly, and in the best Manner, shew that you are such, and be own'd
- John xv. 8. by me as my Scholars, those who have learned the Truth as it is in Jesus. What is the Honour of God, but to have his Will thus comply'd with in all Things? Where the Gospel comes with such a blessed Effect, here is the most full answering and falling in with what God requires, and makes for his great Praise. St. Peter speaking of Persons thus gospeliz'd, (as we may
- Eph. iv. 21. say) *You (saith he) are a chosen Generation, a royal Priesthood, an holy Nation, a peculiar People, that ye should shew forth the Praises of him who hath called you out of Darkneß into his marvellous Light.* There's the End of all those Privileges and Blessings of the Gospel, the Honour of God, the Great Author, Bestower and Worker of all. It
- 1 Pet. ii. 9. seems to refer to what God said by Isaiah, *This People have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my Praise:* They shall declare both by Word and
- Isa. xliii 7. 21. Deed,

Deed, what makes for my Honour, and may excite others to praise and glorify me. *Ye also* : Pet. ii. as lively Stones are built up a spiritual House, an holy Priesthood to offer up spiritual Sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, said the Apostle Peter : These are they, who in their Frame, and Life and Carriage, are most to GOD's Honour, paying him most Respect and Duty, shewing forth most of his Perfections unto the World. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Eph. i. 2, (said St. Paul) who hath blessed us with all spiritual Blessings in heavenly Places (or Things) in Christ Jesus, according as He hath chosen us in him ; that we should be holy and without Blame before him, in Love, to the Praise of the Glory of his Grace ; or of his glorious Grace : The greater the Measure of Holiness, the more Glory to GOD, the Fountain and Worker of it : As the same Apostle, speaking to the Philippians, says, I pray that Phil. i. 9. your Love (viz. to GOD and Men) may abound more and more in Knowledge and in all Judgment, that you may approve Things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without Offence, till the Day of Christ, being filled with the Fruits of Righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the Glory and Praise of God. This full Blessing of the Gospel, then, makes for the Glory of GOD, in causing fullest Obedience to his Commands. Where this is, the Gospel Institution (the Aim of which is God's Glory) is best answer'd, and his Calls and Expectations therein most fully comply'd with ; and this makes for GOD's Honour. As it does also,

(2.) BY increasing the Number, and heightening the Excellency and Lustre of his Servants. In Prov. xiv. the Multitude of People (saith the wise Man) is ^{28.}
the

the King's Honour. So is it of the King of Kings ; it makes for his Glory the greater Additions there are of willing and faithful Subjects to Him ; and the more of Excellence in those Subjects, the Honour still the greater. As for a King to rule over, not only a numerous, but a wise and good, an industrious and faithful People ; this must speak him great indeed, and give him much Regard and Consideration, both at Home and Abroad. O how glorious is GOD in his Court and Presence-Chamber above, with that vast and splendid Train of Domesticks and Attendants on him there ! Angels of several Ranks and Orders, and Spirits of just Men made perfect ! And for filling more and more that Kingdom of Glory in Heaven, is the Kingdom of his Grace here on Earth ; the bringing Persons into which, and improving them in Holiness as much as may be, is the greatest Honour to GOD in this World. For this Purpose is the Gospel ; and this it effects in proportion as it comes with a Blessing, as it increases the Number and brightens the Graces of GOD's People, who, the more pure, and perfect, and shining they are, the more becoming his Excellent Majesty : *He is glorified in his Saints, and admired in them that believe.* What Splendor like that of Grace ? This is true Excellency. We read of *the Beauties of Holiness*, it has all Comeliness and Worth in it. Thus then, a Ministry Coming to a People in *the Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel*, is happy, as it makes much for the Honour of GOD, in the most full Compliance with his Aim and Will in his Institution, and increasing the Number, and heightening the Excellency and Lustre of his Servants. And,

2 Thef. i.
10.

Pf. cx. 3.

2. It makes for pleasing God also: Not only by bringing Him that Honour, of which under the former Head; but as framing to Him more Objects, and those more fit for his Complacence and Delight. Man's Misery may draw Pity; but till he be made pure and holy, he can't be meet for the divine Pleasure: *The Righteous Lord loveth Righteousness, and his Countenance beholdeth the Upright*: His pleased Countenance, that is. Holiness is his Image and Likeness, which He can't but love where-ever He sees it. Now the Gospel, where it comes with a Blessing, instamps this Image: *We all with open Face beholding as in a Glass the Glory of the Lord*, (saith the Apostle, speaking of the Gospel-Glass) *are changed into the same Image, from Glory to Glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord*. Seeing in the Gospel the Representation of GOD's Holiness, which is his Glory, the Spirit of GOD by its Operation, makes the Sight impressivè of Holiness, which is a divine Glory, upon the Soul, not perfect at first, but by beholding, growing more and more toward it, *from Glory to Glory*. Where the Gospel comes with a Fulness of Blessing, it makes Persons and Churches eminent and conspicuous in this, and answerably pleasing unto GOD. *How fair, and how pleasant art thou, O Love, for Delights!* saith CHRIST to his Church, for the excellent Graces that are in thee, which make thee amiable and delightful to me in the highest Degree: So much the abstract Plural imports, thy Holiness, which is thy Beauty, makes thee all *Delights* to me. *Thou hast ravished my Heart* (saith he in another Place) *with one of thine Eyes, with one Chain of thy Neck*: Leaving it to be concluded, how amiable those

Cant. v.
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Persons and Societies appear, when the whole of their Graces and Perfections are look'd upon, if but one or two, a Part of them, could have such Effect. Where the Gospel comes with a *full Blessing*, then, what Delights are here prepar'd for GOD's Eye! This makes such (according to another Metaphor in that divine Song) *like a Garden* full of fragrant Flowers, and pleasant Fruits, into which the Master delights to come. This then accounts well for the Happiness of a Ministry so coming; it makes for pleasing, as well as honouring of GOD. Farther,

3. *THIS makes for the Credit of Religion*: That it is such a Thing as wants but to be seen, and rightly understood, to obtain Esteem and Respect in the World. Were there fairer Copies of it, and in greater Number, how would the Repute thereof be advanc'd and rais'd! At least, where Prejudices are not exceedingly rooted and violent. They are the sad Defects and Blemishes in the Lives of Christians, that make Christianity itself so ready to be slighted and disregarded, and sometimes to be reproach'd too; as if it taught no better, when many, who pretend to have learn'd it, are seen to live no better. When the Gospel comes in *the Fulness of the Blessing of it*, this Ground of Reproach is prevented, or taken away; Religion there shines out with greatest Lustre and Beauty, and the Amiableness of it is made to appear in the Eyes of all. When its Professors are made so much liker to GOD and CHRIST, as then they will be, what Reputation must it get, and what Advantage to recommend and spread itself more in the World? How desirable and happy a Thing

Thing therefore must it be, for a Ministry thus to come to a People in *the Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ*; that Prejudices against Religion may be most effectually hinder'd or remov'd, Love and Esteem of it rais'd, and so a Way made for its more ready and universal obtaining, where the Gospel comes? This then is another Account: A Ministry so coming makes for *the Credit of Religion*, and so for advancing it in the World. And again,

4. THIS recommends the Gospel itself, that is *the Means of so much Good*. It shews it not to be a weak and powerless Institution; but mighty thro' God, to the pulling down the strong Holds of ² Cor. x. Satan, and setting up the Kingdom of Christ, where ^{4.} it comes. Nothing commends the Word, and Ministry of it, like the full, great, and large Effects and Successes thereof, in the Hearts and Lives of those that hear it; making them better, drawing the fairest and brightest Lines and Characters of Piety and true Godliness upon them. This will draw Confessions, That God is in it of *a Truth*. The Glory of the Gospel lies not only in the fuller and clearer Discoveries of divine Truths therein made, the open Manifestation of the Will of God, and Way of Life and Salvation by Jesus Christ, and the large and free Tenders thereof made unto all; but likewise in the mighty Power and Virtue going with it, from which it is called, *The Ministration of the Spirit*. The Spirit did in ¹ Cor. iii. some Measure and Degree accompany the Old ^{8.} Dispensation; but now there is a more plentiful Pouring of it forth, and the Gospel is the Channel and Way in which it is given, and Instrument by which it works. Now where this comes in the *Fulness of the Blessing of it*; this is

Rom. i.
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1 Cor. i.
21.

seen to the Honour and Praise of the Word and Gospel itself, as well as of GOD the Author of it. This is an Institution which, for its Efficacy and Power to make Men better, to reform the World, and save Mens Souls, far transcends all the Heathen Wisdom and Philosophy, and the Jewish Pedagogie. St. Paul had an Eye to both, when he said to the Romans, *I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ*, (There is a *Litotes* in the Expression, meaning, *I glory in the Gospel*) *for it is the Power of God unto Salvation, to every One that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek; To the Jew first, because first sent to 'em: who tho' they had the Oracles of GOD, and the Gospel itself, as we may say, under a Vail; yet thro' their own Blindness, and the Obscurity of the Medium, could comparatively see little in it, nor feel much Vertue from it: and therefore it needed a more clear Discovery, and more of the Spirit accompanying it, to give it Force on their blind and dead Souls; as accordingly here is in the New Dispensation of the Gospel, and thereby 'tis able to save the Jews, and also the Greeks. Those whom all their Arts and Sciences, and boasted Learning and Philosophy, long Experience had shewn could not quicken to any thing of a divine and holy Life; yet These, a powerful Gospel could convert and save. How much greater Virtue is here therefore, than in the Jewish Pedagogie, or Heathen Oratory and Philosophy!* After that in the Wisdom of God, the World by Wisdom knew not God, (saith the same Apostle elsewhere) *it pleased God by the Foolishness of Preaching to save them that believe: That, which proud and ignorant Men call'd and counted Foolishness, this the Wise and Good GOD, by his Blessing, makes the effectual Means of Conversion*

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version and Salvation. This Vertue and Power of the Gospel, is no where manifested, like as there, where it comes in the *Fulness of the Blessing of it*; which therefore must speak that Ministry happy wherein it so comes, and is signally effectual for Conviction and Conversion of Sinners, and Edification of Saints; advancing them more and more in Holiness and all divine Graces and Perfections: Where little or no such Fruit of it is seen, the World is ready to think there is no great Matter in it; 'tis no such excellent and powerful Means and Institution as is pretended; tho' themselves be the faulty Causes of its Unsuccessfulness; for, *If our Gospel be hid, 'tis hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this World hath blinded the Minds of them that believe not, lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine unto them.* They wilfully shut their Eyes, and so provoke God to do it judicially; withholding his Blessing from the Word, and leaving them to their own Blindness and Hardness. Yet this, by such obstinate Sinners, shall be turn'd to the Disparagement of the Word itself; as if that had no such Vertue as is talk'd of. See we not, may they be ready to say, Multitudes that profess and live under it, shewing no such Effects of it? What do they more, or how are they better than others? Are they not as proud, and vain, and passionate, and worldly, as any? Where then is that singular Excellency spoken of? Philosophy has brought some to more virtuous and praise-worthy Lives, than many lead, who make Profession of Christianity. But now where a Ministry comes in the *Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ*, there is more Advantage and fairer Ground for preventing or removing such Objections and Prejudices; the great and excellent

excellent Power of the Gospel being there evident and conspicuous : *We have this Treasure in earthen Vessels, that the Excellency of the Power may be of God, and not of us,* (says the Apostle) i. e. may appear to be of GOD, viz. in doing so great Things by such weak Instruments : The mighty Power of GOD, and of his Word, is seen in this. An *Excellency of Power* there is in the Gospel, when it comes with a Fulness of Blessing, and this makes for the great Praise and Glory of it; which accounts for the Happiness of a Ministry so coming to a People. And further, another Reason may be taken

5. FROM *the great Good hereby unto Men, viz.*

(1.) TO *those particularly, who are so blessed* : How rich and honourable, and every way happy do they hereby become ! the special Delight and Favourites of GOD, in whom He takes Complacency, and to whom He manifests and communicates himself more freely, and fully, and comfortably than unto others ; because these are by his Grace most fitted for his Presence, desire and delight in Him most, and carry best toward Him, and his Spirit. O the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge, of Holiness and Grace, of Peace and Joy, that are reposed in such Souls ! Where the Gospel comes with a full Blessing, what Good can be wanting ? Such are made understanding in their Duty, have Inclination and Strength from GOD to perform it, and are prepared for Trials and Sufferings, if they come, so as to *Glorify God in the Fires.* They are fortify'd against Temptations and spiritual Enemies, any Things or Persons, that would draw or drive them from GOD : they have

Ifa. xxiv.
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have a clear and constant Spring of Satisfaction and Peace in their Breasts, by the Regularity and good Order brought into their Passions and Affections: the Evidences of GOD's Love: Freedom, in good Measure, from Doubts and Fears, or they soon solve and scatter them, by inspecting themselves, and considering what GOD has done in them, and for them, and the Blessings bestow'd on them, *Things that accompany* Heb. vi. 9. *Salvation*. In a Word, Where the Gospel comes with a Fulness of Blessing, GOD, and Christ, and the Spirit come, with a Measure of gracious, quickening, and comfortable Operation, more than is common to all Believers. Happy Souls that are favour'd with such Guests! And happy Ministry that is the Means of so much Blessing! And not only are Particulars and Individuals happy, who are so blessed; but

(2.) A CHURCH or Churches wherein Numbers of such are; these are as a Field that the Lord hath blessed, or a Garden watered by him, and thereby made fresh and flourishing, sending forth its fragrant Odours, and delicious Fruits; into these the Great Master takes Pleasure to come, and will not repent of all his Care, and Cost, and Cultivation bestow'd on them: *Let my Beloved* Cant. iv. *come into his Garden, and eat his pleasant Fruits*, 16. said the Church. A Garden is an inclosed Spot, separated from the Wilderness, or Common-Grounds, and cast into comely Order, set with the choicest Plants and Flowers, and Fruit-bearing Trees, many Times: Unto such are Churches compar'd, in which are the Plants of Righteousness, and the Souls of Believers, wherein are the precious Graces of God's Spirit. The Metaphor speaks the Beauty and
Excel-

Excellency of *Believers*, beyond all *others*; and of *Churches*, in which are Many of those; and the Delight and Pleasure that Christ takes in them, and in the Actings and Exercise of those Graces, which are the *pleasant Fruits*, the Church speaks of. And this Notion imports the Watchfulness and Care that is about such Persons and Societies; as a Garden is separated, so is it fenced, and defended from what would spoil the Order, or prejudice the Plantation that is in it:

- Isa. v. 1, *My Beloved hath a Vineyard in a very fruitful Hill,*
 2. (*viz.* the Blessing of God making it so) *and he fenced it.* No Inheritance so secured as God's:
 —xxvii. *I the Lord do keep it,* (says he elsewhere) *I will*
 2, 3. *water it every Moment, lest any hurt it; I will keep it Night and Day.* Such a flourishing, improved State and Condition of a Church, and its Members, makes it most like Heaven, of any Thing here on Earth. Here God has most Honour, Love, Service and Obedience; and here is most of his Favour and Presence. On these his Blessings descend, they have best Security as to the Continuance of his Gospel and Ordinances with them; He will not remove their Candlestick, as He threatens to do with unprofitable and decaying Churches. There is most Hope of their being defended too from the Malice and Rage of Enemies, so as that they shall not deprive them of their spiritual Privileges and Enjoyments: In his Epistle to the *Philadelphian Church*, who had obtain'd Grace to be faithful and honest, *Keeping his Word, and not denying his*
 Rev. iii. *Name:* *Therefore* (says God) *I have set before*
 7, &c. *thee an open Door, and no Man can shut it.* I have given thee Freedom and Liberty of professing and propagating my Truth and Gospel, and it shall not be in the Power of Men to hinder thee.

thee. Behold, I will make them of the Synagogue of Satan; which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; (false and hypocritical Professors, that is, most opposite to, and Haters of the true, I'll make them) come and worship before thy Feet, (pay outward and civil Respects to thee, at least) and to know that I have loved thee: (viz. more than them) Because thou hast kept the Word of my Patience, I also will keep thee from the Hour of Temptation, which shall come upon all the World, to try them that dwell upon the Earth: A Day and Time of Tryal and Persecution, will come upon the Generality of those that profess Christianity; but you that have been faithful and sincere, and cleaved to me, and not declined as to Faith or Practice, you I'll take Care of, to shelter you from the Storm, which will fall upon, and overthrow many Churches, as well as particular Persons. Where the Gospel comes with a Fullness of Blessing, they shall find the Profit and Comfort of it; they will be dear to GOD, and specially taken Care of by Him. Yea,

(3.) THIS not only puts such Persons and Churches into the best Capacity and Way of receiving and enjoying much Good, but also of doing much. By that holy Skill and Wisdom, Benignity and Kindness, fervent Love to GOD and Men, that this Blessing carries in it, what may not be hoped for, to the mutual Benefit of one another, and of those about, or in Reach of them? Their eminent Graces will be winning and ingaging, and will put them upon all Endeavours to be useful and profitable to as great Extent as may be; they'll long and strive to help others to Heaven and Happiness, by recommending Religion to them, and bringing them to see the Beauty, and

taste the Sweetness of it. This full Blessing with which the Gospel has come to them, will make them an eminent Blessing in the Places where they are, doing all the Good they can to them, and for them, and praying down Blessings and Mercies from GOD upon them. They'll ever be imploying and improving their Interest in that Court above, for the Advantage of their Fellow-creatures here below; and for such Purposes, indeed, does GOD eminently bless some, that they may be Blessings unto more; He stores, and fills, and uses them unto such Ends: And happy that Ministry which thus *makes ready a People prepared for the Lord.* Add hereto,

(4.) THIS full spiritual Blessing of the Gospel, where it comes, makes the better Way for outward Blessings also. For, as in reference to Title, these have the same Assurance of such Things that all godly Persons have, *i. e.* so far as they are truly good for them, and may subserve to, or at least stand with their best Interests; (with Respect to which GOD will always go, in dispensing them unto his Children) so here being best Preparation for receiving and using worldly Things aright, GOD may intrust more of them with such, than otherwise He would. GOD does not deny or take away such Comforts from his Servants, as grutching them any Good, or favouring others on whom He bestows them, more than He does his own; but, as seeing, in regard of their Corruptions, they would be hurtful to them. He, otherwise, is a God that *takes Pleasure in the Prosperity of his People*; and were they generally so fortify'd against Ill, and fitted for Good, by and with

with such Things, He would many times bestow more upon them. Upon this Ground it is, that some have Hope and Expectation of a more happy outward flourishing State of the Church in the latter Days, because more of a *Spirit of Holiness*, it is thought, will be pour'd forth, which will turn all to the Honour of God, and farthering of what is good, and keep from Abuse of earthly Blessings, and then they shall be favour'd with greater Plenty of them. The chiefest Glory of the Church will be, indeed, its inward Purity; but outward Prosperity, in Conjunction with that, may give it also some Advantage. *Upon Mount Sion shall be Deliverance*, Obad. ver. and there shall be Holiness, and the House of Jacob shall possess their Possessions. Where the Gospel comes with a Fulness of Blessing, it will teach how to abound, if God see fit to increase the Store, and may make the better Way for such Increase, God blessed the House of Obed-edom, 2 Sam. vi. for his willing entertaining the Ark; and so may He Families and Churches, where his Gospel is received and improved in the best Manner and Measure: For, *Godliness is profitable for all Things, having Promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come.* 1 Tim. iv. 8. Which suggests another Account of the Happiness of a Ministry that comes to a People in the Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ, viz.

(5.) NOT only an Increase of Benefits here, but hereafter. The more Grace and Holiness in this World, the more Glory in the other. That there will be Degrees of Glory in Heaven, is evident in the Word; the Parable of the Talents shews, That according to Mens Trusts, and Improvements, will be their Reward. As

in Matter of Punishments, they will be proportion'd to Mens Offences; so the Recompences of the Just, will be to their Righteousness and Obedience: The former, indeed, of Debt, but the latter of Grace and free Gift; and yet in some Respects just too, viz. in Regard of the Promise of GOD, and the Rule of Distribution, which He has been pleased to declare and set to himself: *Behold, I come quickly, (saith Christ) and my Reward is with me, to give to every Man according to his Work.* Christ rewards, *Secundum, non propter, opera*; Works are not the *meriting Cause* of the Rewards given to the Saints, but the *Measure* by which GOD goes in bestowing of them. The least sincere Service shall not go without its Recompence, all that are *faithful to Death*, shall have a *Crown of Life*; but the Crowns of some will be more weighty and splendent, than those of others, according as they have been eminent in Grace and Holiness, and abundant in the Fruits of Righteousness. *Be steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord*; (saith the Apostle) *for as much as ye know, that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord.* It would, in part at least, be in vain, if an higher Degree and fuller Measure turn'd to no more Account, than a less, the *abounding* would be of no Profit; but it shall not be so. *Whatsoever a Man soweth, that shall he also reap*: There's for the Kind. *He that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully, shall reap bountifully*: There's for the Degree. GOD thus encourages Endeavours after the highest Attainments in Grace, and Measures of Obedience, by Promises of answerably full and glorious Communications in the other Life.

Grace

Rev. xxii.
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1 Cor.
xv. 58.

Gal. vi. 7.

2 Cor. ix.
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Grace more enlarges the Capacity, suits the Soul in Proportion to the Degrees of it to the felicitating Object, who answerably lets forth, and communicates itself to it. Where is more Knowledge of God, will be clearer Visions of Him; where more Love, will be closer Union with Him, and Adherence to Him, and higher Complacencies and Delights in Him. How happy is that Ministry then, which coming with a full Blessing, is the Means to such exalted Happiness above? As this brings down much of Heaven now, in the Peace and Joy that it begets in the Soul, and gives abundant, i. e. triumphant Entrance into it at last, so it places in the highest Seats there. That such a Ministry is happy, is seen in the Rewards promised to the Ministers employed and used therein. They who have this divine Skill and Wisdom, shall shine as the brightness of the Firmament; and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever. Dan. xii. 3.

And thus of the Reasons taken from the Subjects of this full Blessing, the Comfort and Benefit to them; their Persons; and Societies, in which Numbers of them are; their enlarged Capacity hereby both for receiving and doing much Good; the best and fairest Way it puts into, for outward and temporal Blessings; as well as spiritual, at least, for enjoying God, and tasting his Love in such Things, be they more, or less; and the Promise it has not only for the Life that now is, but that which is to come. A Fulness of Glory, suitable to what here is of Grace; greater Happiness and Joy in Heaven, proportionable to the increased Holiness here on Earth; an abundant Reward, for abundant Work and Service. Add to these, one Ground more, viz.

6. THE great Joy and Comfort to Ministers, who preach the Gospel of Peace, and bring Glad-Tidings of good Things to perishing Sinners. When the Word preach'd by them is believed, and the Message they bring accepted; when Many are turn'd to Righteousness, and the Righteous are more and more strengthened and improved in Piety and Goodness; when those under their Charge, thrive and prosper, and increase with the Increases of God, and are filled with all his Fulness (according as the Apostle pray'd for the Ephesians) then are the Hearts of Ministers glad, more than in any mere human Respects or Advantages, that do, or can come to them. This is what they study, and pray, and labour for; Success of their Ministry, in the fullest spiritual Profit of their People, crowns their Wishes, and draws out greatest Praises and Thanksgivings to GOD from them. However it be with themselves in outward Considerations; whether rich, or poor; honour'd, or reproach'd; in easie, or afflicted Circumstances: yet if GOD owns them, affords his Presence with them, gives them many Seals of their Ministry, and accompanies their Endeavours with an abundant Blessing, this satisfies. They are thankful, indeed, that GOD has not suspended their own Acceptance and Reward, on the Success, but on their Faithfulness: Where this is, *Tho' Israel be not gathered, yet shall they be glorified.* But this does not so content, as that they can look on such a Case, without greatest Affliction; they must and will have Sorrow of Heart, and continual Heaviness on such Accounts, and bewail it before GOD in all their Addresses to him. They would readily be at any Pains,

Colos. ii.
19.

Isa. xlix.
5.

Rom. ix.
2.

Pains, endure any Sufferings, undergo any Hardships, that Barrenness might not be upon their Ministry; that they might bring many Souls to GOD, and build them up in Holiness and Comfort, and have Evidence, that their Coming to them has been *in the Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ*; and this Grief or Joy of Ministers, on these Accounts, is not a light or little Thing with GOD. Where a faithful Ministry has little Success, and the Minister much Sorrow on that Score, it will be found to add no little Weight in the Reckoning with those who have been the Occasions of it: A Thing fit to be consider'd by every *careless and unprofitable Hearer*. And thus for the *Answer* to the fourth Enquiry, *How appears the Happiness of a Ministry Coming to a People in the Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel?* Proceed we now to the next and last, *viz.*

Q. V. WHAT Use and Improvement is to be Serm. III. made of this Truth?

A. SEVERAL Deductions, or Inferences may be drawn from it, for Instruction and Profit. Particularly,

I. SAD then is a fruitless and ineffectual Ministry; such as come with none, or with but little of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ.

(I.) WHERE none of the Blessing accompanies it, but Persons remain utterly in their Blindness and Corruption; as if such Means of Light and Grace had not at all been vouchsafed to them. This is that which the Apostle dealt so earnestly with the Corinthians upon: *We then, 2 Cor. vi. (saith I.*

(saith he) *as Workers together with him, beseech you, that you receive not the Grace of God in vain: By the Grace of God, is here meant, the Gospel of Grace.* He had before signified, That God had committed unto them *the Ministry and Word of Reconciliation*; whereupon, saith he, *We then as Workers together with him, as Instruments and Under-workers with God, beseech you, that ye receive not the Grace of God, this Word and Ministry, this Gospel of God's Grace, in vain, fruitlessly; that is, to none of those saving and sanctifying Purposes for which it was revealed.* Let not Ministers come and go without their Errand, complaining as the Prophet *Isaiab, Who hath believed our Report? and to whom hath the Arm of the Lord been revealed? Who? i. e. few or none have believed, and felt the mighty Power and Efficacy of the Word; such as is felt, when it comes in the Blessing of it.*

Obj. If it be said, Can Men be blam'd for this? Have they the Command of God's Arm, that it be revealed, and the Power thereof put forth at their Pleasure? If He would reveal his Arm, who can hinder?

A. Tho' it be true, none can believe without God's Power enabling, which is call'd, *revealing his Arm*; yet that He does not reveal it, where the Gospel comes, will be found chargeable upon Persons themselves: *If our Gospel be hid, 'tis hid to them that are lost, (saith the Apostle) in whom the god of this World hath blinded the Eyes of them that believe not, lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God, should shine unto them.* Men, where the Gospel comes, are unbelieving, not negatively merely,

2 Cor. iv.
3, 4.

merely, as is the Case of Heathens, who have not the Means ; but *positively*, shutting their Eyes against the Light, and rejecting the Calls and Offers of the Word, and then Satan, by GOD's righteous Judgment, blinds and hardens them more and more, so that *they judge themselves unworthy of eternal Life*, wilfully refusing and turning away, when they are invited and called to lay Hold of it. *You will not come unto me, that you may have Life*, said Christ : 'Tis put upon their *will not* ; their *Destruction* therefore *is of themselves*, tho' *in God is their Help*. He is able and ready to change their unwilling Will ; but in order to it, He expects Persons should be sensible of their Need of his Grace, and apply to him for it ; that they attend where He is wont to work, *Watching daily at Wisdom's Gates, and waiting at the Posts of her Doors* ; that they should follow him, with humble Importunity, for so great and necessary a Blessing. Is less than this reasonable ? Should Heaven and Happiness be forc'd upon any ? If not, but it be fit and worthy to be sought, (as who but must confess it is ?) where is the Person, who can stand forth, and truly say, He hath so done, and persever'd therein, and all in vain ? No, we are well assur'd, that all Mouths will be stop'd in the great Day of Accounts, and *God will be clear when he judgeth*, and the Methods of his Dealing justified before Angels and Men : *God made Man upright ; but he hath sought out many Inventions*. The Gospel, which He sends, is an apt Means for Mens Recovery, and his Spirit ready to co-operate with it, and follow it with a Blessing ; but Sinners, thro' their own Blindness and Perverseness, turn away, either neglecting the Means, or being very slight and careless in the

L Use

Acts xiii.

46.

John v.

40.

Hos. xiii.

9.

Prov. viii.

34.

Eccl. vii.

29.

Matth.
vii. 7, 8.

Eph. iv.
18.

Col. i. 21.

Use of them, letting loose their Hearts and Affections to the World, or to their base Lusts. If by some Word, or Providence, they are in any Degree awaken'd, and made to think with some Seriousness of their eternal Interests and Concerns; yet it soon wears off, and they returning to their wonted Frame, and Course, without any Change, all those Tendencies to Good die away. Would Men *pray and not faint*; seek, and hold on therein with Earnestness; there is Ground for such to hope and expect they shall find: They are our blessed Saviour's own Words, *Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you: for every One that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened*: Every One that so asketh, viz. seriously, earnestly, and with Perseverance: That seeks in the Way and Means, and by the Mediator that God hath appointed; who goes to God in Christ, and looks for the Grace and Blessing of the Gospel thro' him, and for his Sake. Sad then is it, that when all on God's Part is thus ready, Sinners should be so backward, and unready, and by that Means, tho' the Gospel come, yet the Blessing of the Gospel should be still wanting. With how many is it so? They remain ignorant under Means of Light; *Dead in Trespasses and Sins*; tho' they have the quickening Ordinances of the Gospel, they are still *alienated from the Life of God, and Enemies in their Minds by wicked Works*. Tho' they have the Word and Ministry of Reconciliation among them, how is Guilt hereby aggravated! everlasting Perishing endangered, and that too under more Woe than any others! Against these, slighted and abused Mercy, as well as offended Justice, will rise in Judgment.

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A rejected and despised Saviour, as well as a righteous Ruler, will come to reckon with them. *If I had not come and spoken to them,* (said John xv. Christ) *they had not had Sin,* none so great, none ^{22.} of this Kind, *positive Unbelief,* and rejecting me and my Gospel; *but now they have no Cloke for their Sin.* This Rejecting the Remedy leaves them utterly without Excuse; other Sins might have been pardoned, were it not for this, which binds down the Guilt of all, and is itself greater and blacker than all the other; being against infinite Love and Grace, which, if any Thing, sure should have won and engaged the Heart, and have conquered its Aversion. This brings *Wrath to the utmost*; more tolerable will it be ^{Matth. x. 15.} for *Tyre and Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrah,* those Heathen Lands, than for such Sinners as these. —xi. 22. If the Ministry be happy, which comes with a *Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel,* how sad is it then, where it comes utterly without a Blessing? sad for such Souls, such Places. With the Body of the *Jews* it was so, and what came of them? They were rejected from their Church-State; yea, their Temple and Nation destroy'd, and themselves made Vagabonds on the Earth, unto this Day. Only a Remnant of them called and converted by the Gospel, who coalesce with the Gentile Churches. And probably, where God sends his Gospel, He has some to call and save thereby, tho' the Generality be hardened. Wherefore,

(2.) IN a Degree it is sad too, where the Gospel comes not with so full a Blessing, as would be wished; either as to the Numbers *savingly wrought on thereby,* or as to *Eminency and Growth in Grace,* where it hath been wrought in Truth. If, compara-

tively, few be converted, and such as really are, yet remain weak and unthriving, and make not the Proficiency which they might, and should; both these Ways, 'tis Matter of Concern, and afflictive Consideration, to such as are good.

[I.] THAT *the Devil's Kingdom should be so wide and extended, and Christ's so narrow and confin'd*; that, tho' in respect of Right, all Souls are his; yet his Right should be practically own'd and yielded to by so few, when the Recognizing it by them, would be so infinitely to their Benefit, as well as his Honour; and Refusal is so fatal, holding them under Chains of Darkness to a Day of most fearful Judgment and Indignation. If we look over a Land or Place; yea, or a Congregation; and consider how many there may be, of whom it may be feared, that tho' they have the Gospel, yet it hath not come to them with the Blessing of it, how sad Thoughts may it raise? Such a Consideration as this, 'tis said, drew Tears from the Eyes of *St. Chrysostom*, when he was preaching to his People; if it do not the like in others, it may arise more from Want of like Tenderness, and affecting Sense and Concern in the Preacher, than that the Case is better. It concerns all, both Ministers and People, to lay to Heart the small Number of real serious Christians every where. That so few such rise up to fill the Places of those who have been taken away. May the Gospel come with a more plentiful Blessing in this Respect, that there may be a greater Number of holy, practical Christians; the Smallness of which may, and should

should be for a Lamentation. And not that only but ;

[2.] THAT *such as are good, and have received somewhat of the Blessing of the Gospel, yet have it to no greater a Degree : That Knowledge, and Faith, and Holiness, the Gifts and Graces of the Spirit, are no more abounding in them ; and that the Fruits of Righteousness are so scanty in the Lives of Professors. The Design of the Gospel, where it comes, is not only to work Grace, but to water it when wrought, that it may increase, and be fruitful ; that it may put forth itself in all proper Actings and Exercises, to the Glory of God, and Good of Men ; that Believers may be strong in the Grace that is in Christ Jesus ; that they may be abounding in good Works.* ^{1.} *I am the true Vine, (saith Christ) and my Father is the Husbandman ; every Branch in me, that beareth not Fruit, He taketh away ; and every Branch that beareth Fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more Fruit ; and herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much Fruit, so shall ye be my Disciples : So shall you appear to be mine indeed ; such as have been taught to good Purpose. Abundance of good Fruit, commends the Stock, and the Care of the Husbandman, in what was needful to promote Fruitfulness ; but Barrenness, and an unthriving State, especially where much Care, and Cost, and Labour has been expended, that's displeasing. For Christians to be low and weak in Grace, tho' of considerable Time and Standing in the Church, and scanty in good Works ; this shews, that tho' they have enjoy'd the Gospel not altogether without a Blessing, yet not in such Fulness, as might and should have been, which would have made them* more

² Tim. ii.

¹ Cor. xv.

^{58.} John xv.

^{1, 2.}

Ver. 8.

more thriving. And this is a Case, tho' not so bad as the former, yet which is to be reflected on with Shame and Grief: That when the Gospel is so apt a Means for spiritual Growth and Profiting, and design'd, and given for that Purpose, and therefore continu'd so long with a People, and they under it; yet it should have no more of its intended Effect. As the *Blessing of the Gospel*, is the special desirable Thing, so is the *Fulness of that Blessing*, most desirable; and any faulty Coming short to be bewailed, and look'd on with Humiliation. Is the Gospel so full of Virtue, and Power, and pregnant with so many Blessings? and shall so little of its good Effects be taken up with, and rested in? Will not all that Grace and Goodness be longed for, and look'd after in, and by it, which it is apt, and design'd to work and produce? and Defects be lamented? Where there is Coldness and Indifferency about a *fuller Blessing*, it will render it suspicious, whether the Gospel has come with any *true and special Blessing at all*. Grace is of that excellent Nature, that where it is in Sincerity, more, even to the full Perfection of it, will be long'd for. To sit down easy and satisfied with small and weak Degrees, shews Ignorance of its Worth, is a Measure of slighting and despising of it: Which how can a true Christian think of without great Concern? Thus then of this first Deduction; *Sad is a fruitless and ineffectual Ministry among a People*, such as comes with *none*, or with *but little* of the *Blessing of the Gospel of Christ*. Where this Grace is received either totally in *vain*, as to the great saving Designs of it; or the Blessing reaches but few, and those in weak and low Degrees, GOD is little honoured, Religion little credited in such a Place,

a Place, and little Good done to the Souls of Men ; nothing answerable to those great and glorious Things, which the Gospel is fitted to produce, and which it will effect, where it comes with a full Blessing. Wherefore

2. THIS should put *Persons and Churches on Consideration how it is with themselves in this Matter.* We have the Ministry of the Word ; but how is it in Reference to the Blessing ? Does it come to us in the Truth and Fulness thereof, so as is most desirable ? Is not the Finger here upon our own Sore, among whom it may be feared too little of the blessed Effects and Fruits of the Gospel are to be seen ? How few hear we of, who are touch'd and effectually wrought upon by the Word, and cry out, *What must we do to be saved ?* Were much of the Blessing of the Gospel accompanying it, would not more of this be met with ? Sinners awaken'd and cast down before GOD, and humbled in the Sense of their Sin and Misery, and inquisitive after Relief, desiring Help for their spiritual Wounds, that they might be carry'd on to a good Issue ; neither palliated, nor skin'd over too soon, nor lie open and unbound up, till the Soul bleed and die away in Despair ? Glad would the Hearts of Ministers be, and of all who have themselves received the Gospel with the Blessing of it, were there daily Instances of such a Kind. But, alas ! how rare are they ! *Who hath believed our Report ? and to whom hath the Arm of the Lord been revealed ?* Few, too too few, that hear the Gospel, believe and obey the Gospel. The Word is powerful, able to pull down the strong Holds of Satan, and to set up the Rule and Kingdom of Christ in the Heart ; but it works not necessarily, as the Fire
burns

burns but according as GOD is pleased to work ; in and by it. And He pleases to co-operate, when Means are used and attended on in such Manner, as He has appointed : He will not be wanting to his own Institutions: Where they prove fruitless, the Cause will be found not in GOD, or his Word ; but in the Formality and Carelessness, or other Miscarriage of those who come to hear it. And as to further Improvements and Growth in Grace, *To him that bath, i. e. who shews by due Use that he hath, who stirs up, and exercises Grace received, to him shall more be given.* Is it so with us ? Such as are Christians indeed, are they growing and thriving Christians ? Is there Increasing in Knowledge, Love, Spirituality, and Heavenliness of Heart and Life ? Is there more Humility, Self-denial, Crucifixion to the World by the Cross of Christ, Readiness to, and Delight in doing Good ? Is there adding Grace to Grace ? and one Degree of Grace to another ? such Diligence in, and Communicativeness of Good, such Zeal and Activity in the Service of God, high prizing of his Ordinances, constant, careful, and serious Attendance on them to be seen, as are Evidences of a thriving and growing State, and the Ministry's Coming in the *Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ* ? May not here also be just Mis-givings ? How few such understanding, diligent, and serious Christians are to be found, who, by how much they excel in Knowledge, and other Graces, are the more humble withal, as knowing from whom all have been received ; and the greater their Proficiency by Ordinances, the more they value 'em, and are more careful to wait on GOD in them ; believing the same Means needful to maintain and carry on the Work of Grace, which

which was to begin it ; and that the Word is not only the immortal Seed of a holy and spiritual Life, but the Food also, whereby 'tis preserved and nourished up to Life eternal : *I commend* Acts xx. *you to God, and to the Word of his Grace* (said the 32. Apostle) *which is able to build you up, and to give you an Inheritance among all them that are sanctified.* And thus of this second Head of Improvement ; It should put Persons and Churches on Consideration how 'tis with them in this Matter. And,

3. IN what Measure a Ministry is unfruitful, and destitute of a divine Blessing, it ought deeply to affect, and to put all concern'd on Enquiry into the faulty Causes, and speedy Endeavours for Removal of them.

THE Gospel, and Ministry of it, is an enriching Treasure, made up of many spiritual and heavenly Blessings and Benefits ; that it should come to a People, and yet they remain poor and empty, nothing the better, but, by Abuse and Unprofitableness, much the worse under it, that is sad. Such is the Case where the Blessing of the Gospel goes not with the Dispensation of the Gospel : And such in Part, where, tho' somewhat of the Blessing accompany it, yet 'tis but little. The Comfort and Usefulness of such, will be proportionably low, as their Grace is weak. They can't taste so much of the Delights and Pleasures of Religion, and of the Word of God ; nor feel those Joys, which (sometimes at least) they do, to whom the Gospel comes with a Fulness of Blessing ; nor are like to bring God so much Glory, or do so much Good among Men, as these. Where any right Sense and Judgment of Things is, such a Case must be afflicting, and make Persons inquisitive after

the Causes thereof, and sollicitous for the Removal of them. If it be ask'd,

Q. WHAT may be the Cause, or Causes of this? For

A. I. THIS may be partly, perhaps, thro' Default of those, who minister in holy Things. If there be Want of necessary Skill, or Faithfulness, or Diligence; if there be personal Sins, and Miscarriages, which provoke GOD to deny his Blessing on their Endeavours, and to refuse them the Honour of being his Instruments in doing much Good to the Souls of Men; hence it may come, that a Ministry may be unsuccessful. Some, perhaps, may run, tho' not sent of GOD; and no Wonder if such be not owned, or prospered by him: *I am against the Prophets* (said GOD) *that use their Tongues, and say, He saith, yet I sent them not, nor commanded them; therefore they shall not profit this People at all.* Yea, where may be Gifts, and an outward Call; yet wanting Grace, not having a true Belief, and experimental Sense of spiritual and heavenly Things; as such can't minister so as to be accepted with GOD, for their own Comfort and Happiness; so 'tis not likely that GOD will succeed them in their Work, as He will those whose Hearts are right and thorough with him therein, and who serve Him *with their Spirit in the Gospel of his Son.* 'Tis not deny'd, but the ministerial Acts of those others are valid, and GOD may serve Himself of their Gifts, and make them in some Ways and Measure profitable in his Church; but so full a Blessing is not likely to accompany their Ministrations, as the Labours of the latter. Both in the Nature of the Thing, and by the
righteous

Jer. xxiii.
31, 32.

Rom. i. 9.

righteous ordering of GOD, the Endeavours of honest, faithful, and sincere Ministers, are more likely to profit a People, than of others; their own Faith and Experience, and lively Sense of the Things which they treat of, enables and fits them to speak with more Wisdom and Life to their Hearers, and so to work more on their Judgments and Affections. Not that it is by any Skill or Grace in the Minister, that the Work of Grace is effected in the People; that is from the Word, and the Spirit of GOD giving it Efficacy; *Neither is he that planteth any Thing, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the Increase*: Nevertheless, those Qualifications in the Minister, render him the fitter Instrument for this Work; and ordinarily GOD will rather own and prosper such therein, than those who have Gifts only; I say, *ordinarily*, for a good Man and Minister may, by faulty Negligence, provoke GOD to withhold that Blessing from his Ministrations, which otherwise they might be follow'd with. If even such who are qualified, and called, and sent of GOD to this Work, and whose Hearts, for the main, are right in it, yet remit their Diligence, fall into sinful Sloth and Laziness, give not themselves to Reading, Meditation and Prayer; if they *stir not up the Gift that is in them*; and especially if they fall into any greater Miscarriages, bringing Discredit to their Calling and Profession; it will not be strange, if the Usefulness and Success of such be hinder'd, and the Blessing of the Gospel go not with the Ministry of the Gospel in their Hands; which makes it needful, therefore, for Ministers to *look to themselves, as well as to their Doctrine, and to the Flock*, according to the Charge given to them. A Minister's personal Defects, or Miscarriages, may

1 Cor. iii.

7.

1 Tim. iv.

16.

Acts xx.

28.

render his Labours unprofitable, or less profitable to a People. Those of us, therefore, who are called to this sacred Function, it behoves greatly to consider and take heed that *we fulfil it*; that we be wanting in Nothing that may be needful on our Part to further the Success of the Gospel. Labour we for Skill in the Word of Righteousness, Ability to divide it aright, and distribute to every One his proper Portion; be we diligent and faithfull in dispensing the Word, and in all the Parts and Duties of our ministerial Calling; be we humbled whereinssoever we may have been wanting, and watch, for the future, against flagging in our Zeal for God and his Honour, and the Good of Souls; set we ourselves to promote them to the utmost that we are able; long we, and pray, and strive that our Ministry may be accompany'd with the *Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ*.

A. 2. THIS Unprofitableness of a Ministry, may come thro' Default of the People. As,

(1.) BY Neglect of Attendance on it. How should the Word profit, if Persons put not themselves so much as in the Way of it? Whosoever would have the Blessing of the Word, must come under the Dispensation of the Word. Let every Man be swift to hear, saith St. James: 'Tis spoken upon having mention'd the Word of God as the Means of spiritual Renewing; Of his own Will begat He us, with the Word of Truth, &c. wherefore, let every Man be swift to hear, i. e. careful and ready to attend on the Ministration of the Word. 'Tis a Duty both in order to that holy Change, where it hath not been, and to promote and advance it where it is wrought. Those

James i.
19.

Ver. 18.

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Those, who are begotten by the Word of Truth, are thus charg'd to be *swift to hear*; and to such, saith St. Peter, *As new born Babes, desire the sincere* 1 Pet. ii. *Milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby.* 2. While we are in a growing State, which will be so long as we are on this Side Heaven, the Word, which is the Means of Growth, will be needful to us; Neglect, or slighting the Seasons of Hearing, therefore, deprives of the Benefit; the Gospel can't come to such with *the Fulness of the Blessing*. It concerns those especially, for whom such Seasons are intended, to reflect on it. For profane Persons to slight Ordinances, 'tis no Wonder: *Therefore hear ye not my Words,* (said John viii. Christ) *because ye are not of God, you have no* 47. true Faith in him, or Regard to him: but such as know GOD, and profess Regards to him, should covet the Seasons of waiting on him, and hearing from him what concerns their Duty and Happiness. Serious, and sensible Persons, will say, as David, *A Day in thy Courts, is* Ps. lxxxiv. *better than a thousand; I had rather be a Door-keep-* 10. *er in the House of my God, than to dwell in the Tents of Wickedness.* Where Ordinances are thus valued, and attended on, *the Fulness of the Blessing* may be hoped for; such, at least, are in the Way of it; but if thro' Sloth and Carelessness, or a worldly Spirit, Seasons of Hearing are neglected, what Advances in Knowledge and Holiness are there like to be? How should such be thriving and growing Christians, who use not the Means of Growth? Neglect of Attendance on the Word, therefore, deprives of the Blessing. And so will

(2.) FAULTS in the Manner of Attendance, viz. If it be without Seriousness and Reverence, becoming the Ordinance of God; without an awakened

awakened Sense of spiritual and heavenly Concerns, that they are Matters of Life and Death, of eternal Happiness or Misery, which are treated of ; and without earnest Desires of Understanding and Profiting by the Word. Where this is not propos'd as the End, and the Eye and Heart upon it in Hearing, What Profit is like to ensue ?

Prov. iv. *Hear ye Children, and attend to know Understanding,* said Solomon. Let that be your explicate

1. Aim and Design in your Coming, *Growth in*
2 Pet. iii. *Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Sa-*
18. *viour Jesus Christ.* If you are formal and cus-

tomary, affording only a bodily Presence, the Mind and Thoughts at the same time absent and wandering after Business or Pleasure, something foreign from the Matter in Hand, What Good is like to be gotten ? If wrong Ends and Motives bring to the House of God, viz. only to see or hear some new Thing, to gratify Curiosity, or furnish with some new Notions, not a Concern for bettering of the Heart and Life ; How is the Word like to be accompany'd with a Blessing, and especially with a full one, if attended on in such a faulty Manner ? Whoever comes to it aright, comes both to pay Homage unto God, in the Observance of his Institutions, and with Desires of Communion with Him, and of spiritual, saving Good from Him, by his Attendance ; to get more Knowledge of God, and of his Mind, and Will ; more Strength to perform Duty ; more Conformity to God, and quickening in his Ways and Service ; more Comfort and Peace in their Minds, and Joy in believing ; in a Word, to have the Life of Grace maintain'd and promoted, and carry'd on, as much as may be, toward Perfection. Where the Manner and Ends of Attendance are nothing so, the Blessing

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of the Word will be obstructed. It concerns Persons to examine themselves herein, and so far as Guilt is found, to be humbled for it, and put away such evil Frames and Carriages, all that may hinder the Success of the Word, and its coming with a full Blessing. And not only Neglect of attending, or an undue Manner of it, may be the Hinderance; but further,

(3.) DISREGARD of *needful and proper subsidiary Means and Helps*; such as Prayer and Meditation, repeating and conferring of the Word, endeavouring to fix deep the Impressions of it, and to pursue them in the Life and Conversation.

[1.] NEGLECT of Prayer, *viz.* before and after Hearing; begging of GOD, that it may be to Profit. The Word, as was said, works not its sanctifying, saving Effects, necessarily, but as an Ordinance of GOD, and by the Operation of his Spirit in, and with It; which tho' GOD is ready to afford, yet He will be sought unto for it; and it is not enough that He be sought in concurrence with *publick Prayer* by the Minister, but Persons need *privately and secretly* to apply to GOD and beg this of Him: That He would take away whatever may obstruct, *viz.* Guilt of any Sin; the Presence, or to be sure the Prevalence, of any evil Frame: That He would help to *lay apart all Filthiness and Superfluity of Naughtiness*, and to receive with Meekness the ingrafted Word, which is able to save the Soul: That He would help to attend his Ordinances *without Distraction*, and give an humble, teachable Spirit, to receive the Truth in the Love of it, and lay it up in the Heart, and bring forth the Fruits

Fruits of it in Life. Such serious Applications to GOD *before Hearing*, may be a great Means to bring the Mind and Heart into a good Disposition for Hearing; make it soft and tender, ready to receive divine Impressions, and to yield Obedience to the Word; and therefore should not be neglected, wherever Time may be redeemed for it; at least, *at coming* there should be abstracting the Thoughts from the World, and turning them to the Work in View; lifting up the Heart in Ejaculations unto GOD, to beg his Presence and Assistance in the Duty to be tended to, that it may be to spiritual Profit. And in such preparatory Prayers, the Ministers also should be remember'd, That GOD will be with, and assist them, both in their *Preparations* and *Ministrations*, Prayers, Praises, and Delivery of GOD's Message: That it may be for Matter, the pure unsophisticated Word of GOD; and in such Manner as may be most apt for edifying those who hear: That it may be spoken *as*

1 Pet. iv. *becomes the Oracles of God*, with Plainness, and suitable Affection; *not with enticing Words of Man's*

11.
1 Cor. ii. *Wisdom, but in Demonstration, of the Spirit, and of*

4. *Power*: Neglect of such Applications to GOD, may be one Cause of missing the Blessing. And so likewise *after Hearing*: A Sermon heartily prayed over, is like to abide and bring forth some good Fruit, if all be turn'd into Matter of Address unto GOD, suitably to the Nature and

1 Chron. Uses of what hath been heard, *That He will keep*

xxix. 18. *it for ever in the Imagination of the Thoughts of the Heart*, and give it powerfull Effect and Influence every Way for Good to the Soul. 'Tis GOD only that *teacheth to Profit*; if He be left out and

Isa. xlviii. 17. *forgotten, or not sought to in such serious and earnest*

earnest Manner as should be, what Wonder, if the Blessing be wanting? And so,

[2.] NEGLECT of *Meditation on the Word heard, may hinder*. When no Care or Pains is taken to keep it in the Memory, to retain and fix deep the Impressions of it, by thinking it over again, no Wonder, if the Blessing be miss'd. Meditation is an apt Means to the Word's abiding, and having stronger Influence upon the Heart and Life. Hereby it will be turn'd in *succum & sanguinem*, into Nourishment of the Soul. This Duty is express'd by *Ruminating*, a Word taken from that natural Action of some Creatures, that bring back the Food which hath been taken in, that it may be more perfectly prepar'd for Digestion and Nourishment. Of this Use is Meditation, the Neglect whereof must needs hinder Profiting. O, *how love I thy Law!* Psal. cxix. (said David) *it is my Meditation all the Day*. He 97. loved the Word for the Agreeableness of it to his spiritual Mind and Heart; that made it sweet to his Taste, *sweeter than Honey to his Mouth*, as Ver. 103. he speaks: This Agreeableness, together with the Profit he found, and further hoped for by it, made it the delightful Subject of his daily Thoughts. *Thou thro' thy Commandments hast* Ver. 98. *made me wiser than my Enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more Understanding than all my* Ver. 99. *Teachers; for thy Testimonies are my Meditation*. This tends much to the Increase of practical Wisdom and Godliness; *Meditation* gets out the Virtue of Ordinances, and greatly furthers the *Fulness of the Blessing of them*. Neglect hereof must therefore be an Hindrance. And likewise,

N

[3.] NEGLECT

[3.] *NEGLECT of talking and conferring of the Word.* Repeating Sermons, and discoursing over the Things we have heard, is an apt Means to profit by them. This tends to a clearer Understanding, deeper Impression, and more lasting Remembring what we have been taught, and is also a great Help to the Affections: *Did not our Hearts burn within us,* (said the Disciples) *while he (viz. Christ) talked with us by the Way?* They were conferring together as they walked, when Christ join'd himself to them, and help'd them in the Argument they were upon. In the Nature of the Thing, and by the Blessing of GOD, with which He is ready to follow it, this may further spiritual Improvement, as it tends to mutual strengthening, encouraging and quickening to Increase of Knowledge and Grace; not only by the Light and Heat one gets from, and by one another; but by the Acting and Exercise every One has of his own. Exercise confirms and improves Habits; as they again better dispose and fit for acting. Neglect of this Duty, then, so far hinders Growth, and keeps under the Gifts and Graces of the Spirit; they have not the Improvement, that by this Means they might. And,

[4.] *NOT pursuing the Virtue of Ordinances to suitable Effects in the Life.* If the Word be heard and forgotten, and the Instructions of it not follow'd, how should the Blessing be found? *To him that bath, shall be given,* i. e. to him that uses what he hath aright; such shall have more: *Be ye Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only, deceiving your own selves.* They but deceive themselves, who expect the saving Benefit of the Word by

Matth.

xiii. 12.

Jam. i. 22.

bare

bare Hearing of it: *Blessed are they* (saith our Sa- Luke xi. viour) *who hear the Word of God, and keep it;* ^{28.} they who put in Practice what they hear; for Doing brings the Blessing: *Who so looketh into the* James. i. *perfect Law of Liberty, and continueth therein, he be-* ^{26.} *ing not a forgetful Hearer, but a Doer of the Work, this Man shall be blessed in his Deed.* And thus far of the third general Head of Improvement, Where a Ministry has none, or but little of the Blessing of the Gospel accompanying, it should affect those that are under it, and put them upon Enquiry into the faulty Causes, and speedy Endeavours for Removal of them. Proceed we to another:

4. ALL Means need be used for obtaining and Serm. IV. *furthering of this Success in the best Manner, and fullest Degree and Measure, that may be.* For tho' the Blessing be from GOD, yet as Men by Neglects and Miscarriages on their Part, may obstruct, thereby provoking GOD to deny and withhold it; so by better Behaviour, if I may not say they'll invite, yet they'll be more dispos'd to subserve, and fall in, with GOD's Working. Here therefore is the utmost Care and Diligence requisite, both in Ministers and People, to do what in them lies to this happy Purpose.

(I.) MINISTERS, that they may be apt Instruments for God to work by. *We as Workers together* 2 Cor. vi. *with him* (saith the Apostle) *beseech you, that you* ^{1.} *receive not the Grace of God in vain.* The Words, *with him*, are not in the Original: some take it therefore without any Supply; *We as Workers together*, i. e. *Fellow-helpers* in the Ministry; as St. Paul call'd Timothy, his *Work-fellow*, and his *Fellow-labourer* in the Gospel of Christ. Faith- Rom. xvi. *ful Ministers join Hands in their Lord's Work,* ^{21.}

- with united Skill and Pains, endeavouring the Furtherance of it. Others, who take it to be
 2 Cor. v. *elliptical*, supply it thus: *As Workers together with*
 19. *the Word*; that Word of *Reconciliation*, which he had before said, *was committed to them*. Ministers do not simply propose the Truths of the
 1 Tim. v. Gospel, but *labour in the Word and Doctrine*, take
 17. Pains, and use all Endeavours that it may reach
 2 Tim. iv. its End with the People: They are *instant in*
 1. *Season, and out of Season, reprovng, rebuking, and exhorting, with all Long-suffering and Doctrine*: They press and urge the divine Counsels and Commands, with all the Earnestness and Importunity that may be. But again, others understand *Workers together* here, not of co-ordinate Causes; but so as that one is subordinate, and as the Instrument only in the Hand of the other: So our Translators, who therefore supply it, *with him*: *We then as Workers together with him*, i. e. with GOD and Christ, as Instruments in the
 1 Cor. iii. Hand of the Almighty Efficient: *We, as Labourers together with God* (saith the same Apostle)
 9. i. e. *Under-workers*, which He useth in bringing about the Salvation of Sinners. Now for this Ministers need

[I.] TO get the best and fullest Furniture, that they can, of Knowledge, and all Ministerial Gifts and Graces.

I.) OF Knowledge. I speak not of Arts and Sciences, and such like preparatory, subservient Knowledge, which is suppos'd, and the Study of which too may be continu'd as far as needful; but Knowledge in the Scriptures especially, and
 Ezech. iii. spiritual Wisdom to *win Souls*. Ezekiel, when God
 1. was sending him to teach the People, was bid to eat
 the

the Roll ; noting the digested Understanding that Ministers should have of the Word, when they go to instruct others. *Timothy*, as a good Minister, was *nourished up in the Words of Faith and good Doctrine* : And *Apollos* being mighty in the Scriptures, helped them much, who had believed thro' Grace : These should dwell richly in us, that thereby we may be thoroughly furnished for every good Work. The holy Scriptures are the Ground and Rule, the Measure, and chief Matter of our Teaching. 'Tis true, as natural Religion is imply'd and suppos'd in revealed ; so may, and should, the Principles and Duties of the former be open'd, to make the easier and better Way to the latter, and for confirming and strengthening the Belief of the Gospel : but the Word of God is the Main, wherein we must be studying, and meditating all our Days ; that we may be Scribes instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven ; and like a good Householder, furnish'd for the Uses of his Family, and those who come into it, bringing out of his Treasury Things new and old. 'Tis somewhat as in the Case of a Physician, he needs not only the general, preparatory Knowledge in Natural Philosophy, and the Frame and Oeconomy of humane Bodies ; but specially an Understanding of the *Materia Medica*, of all those Things that are to be used in his Art, for Recovery or Preserving of Health ; what they are, their Nature and Virtue, and to what Cases and Purposes they are proper. The Word of God is the *Materia Medica*, in which we are to be skill'd ; in the Doctrines and Precepts, the Promises and Threatnings, all the Rules and Directions, contain'd therein, for well guiding and ordering of Persons, in all Circumstances and Conditions of Life ; to turn from Sin, to work and

and promote Holiness ; to beget, and maintain spiritual Peace and Comfort, and help safe thro' this World unto a better. Thus of Knowledge. And,

2.) ABILITY and Readiness to apply this Knowledge. This is contained in that *Aptness to teach*, which is requir'd ; not only *Furniture* for it, but *Skill* and *Promptness* to it. St. Paul desires Prayers for himself, That Utterance might be given to him, that he might open his Mouth boldly, to make known the Mysteries of the Gospel : And he bids Timothy, Study to shew himself approved unto God, a Workman that needed not to be ashamed, dividing rightly the Word of Truth : Like a faithful and wise Steward (as our Saviour speaks) giving to every One his Portion in due Season. The suitable and seasonable proposing and applying Truths, makes much for Profiting. 'Tis then as Rain to the mown Grass ; or as Showers to the thirsty and parched Earth ; which drinks it in, and is refreshed, and made fruitful by it. Skill and Wisdom therefore for this, is much to be minded. And,

3.) MINISTERIAL Graces, as well as Gifts, are to be gotten and improved. Not only are such to look to all those Graces, which are common with them and other Christians ; that they be good Men, increasing more and more in real Piety and Godliness ; but that as Ministers, they be affected,

I.] WITH the highest Regard to the Glory of God, in that holy Calling wherein they stand. As this must be their great End, in the first undertaking and devoting themselves unto God in it ;

so

so must it be their great Aim in all their Behaviour and Management of it. They must be carry'd out with a most burning Zeal for GOD's Honour, after the Example of Christ : *The Zeal of thine House* (said he) *hath eaten me up.* 'Tis true, all in their respective Callings and Employments, are to aim at GOD's Glory ; but this is a Calling most *immediately* directed to it, and therefore most specially and highly requiring this Affection, *Zeal for the Honour and Glory of God in all their Ministerial Labours.* And,

2.] GREATEST Love and Compassion likewise for Souls of Men ; pitying them in their Miseries and Dangers, desiring and longing for their Safety and Happiness, thirsting for the Conversion of such as are yet Strangers and Enemies to GOD ; that they may be *acquainted and* Job. xxii. *at peace with Him,* and restored to his Favour ; ^{21.} and that GOD may have his due Honour and Obedience from them ; and that, being brought back to GOD, they may be built up more and more in Holiness and Comfort, and taste the great Benefits of practical Godliness and Religion. This ardent Love to GOD and Souls in Ministers, is that which must carry them out in all Ministerial Endeavours for GOD's Glory, and Men's Good ; must make them constant and unweary'd in their Work, notwithstanding Difficulties and Oppositions from the Devil, and his Instruments, or any Slowness and Backwardness in Men, or Slights and Unkindnesses from those Persons themselves, whose Good they specially labour and watch for. How eminent was St. Paul in this Love and Zeal, and Compassion for poor, lost, perishing Sinners, which made him Indefatigable in endeavouring their Good ?

Good ? But above all, our blessed Saviour himself was wonderful herein : What Love and Pity was it that mov'd him to undertake so costly a Service for them ! The *same Mind should be* in Ministers, that like their Great Lord, they may unweariedly pursue the Ends of their Calling, the Recovery and Salvation of lost Souls. In order to which likewise, there needs be in Ministers,

3.] DEEPEST *Sense of those Matters which they are to deal with Persons upon, viz. the Evil of Sin, the Necessity and Excellence of Holyness, the Misery of an unconverted and unregenerate State, the Certainty of another Life, an Heaven and Hell, the Glory and Happyness of One, and the Horror and Wretchedness of the other,* and Eternity of both. *Knowing the Terrour of the Lord we perswade Men,* said the Apostle. Their own Belief and Sense of those Things fits and disposes to deal with Men about them, in the most lively and affecting Manner, and so with most Aptness and Likelihood of some suitable Impression on them. This then is requisite in Ministers; as Belief of the Truth, so the *Deepest Sense of the Weight and Importance of those Things they are to deal with Persons about.* To which may be added,

4.] HUMBLE *Apprehensions of their own Insufficiency and Weakness, with Trust and Dependance upon God for his Aids and Assistances, and such Measure of Success as he shall please to give.* I put for Brevity several Things here together ; as such a Frame fits for receiving such Assistances, and gives Hope they shall be vouchsafed ; so Want thereof forfeits, and gives Ground to fear they will

will be withheld, and the Success likewise thereon depending: *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any Thing as of ourselves;* ^{2 Cor. iii. 5.} (saith the Apostle) *but our Sufficiency is of God.* He is speaking there of the Efficacy that his Ministry had upon the Hearts of those *Corinthians*; they were the *Epistle of Christ ministered by the Apostle, written not with Ink, but with the Spirit of the living God*: Written by the Spirit, but using the Ministry of the Apostle as the Means; he was the Spirit's *Amanuensis*, as it were, who therefore ascribes all unto him, as the chief Agent. *Who is Paul, and who is Apollos,* (saith ^{1 Cor. iii.} he elsewhere) *but Ministers by whom ye believed,* ^{5.} even as the Lord gave to every Man: The Effect and good Success still is carefully ascribed unto God, in his Strength therefore they go forth: *The Weapons of our Warfare are mighty thro' God,* ^{2 Cor. x.} *to the pulling down of strong Holds, and bringing into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Christ.* And thus of the first Thing in Reference to Ministers, *They need get the best and fullest Furniture, that they can, of Knowledge, and of all ministerial Gifts and Graces, rendering them meet Instruments for God to work by, in communicating the full Blessing of the Gospel.* And then so furnish'd,

[2.] THEY must go forth in God's Strength, using constant and earnest Endeavours, in all the Parts and Duties of their Office, to bring in Souls to Christ, and build them up in their holy Faith, even till they attain the highest Measures of Grace, which may be reach'd by them in this Life; administering to them all the Ordinances of Christ, *Watching over them, as those that must* ^{Heb. xiii.} *give an Account;* warning them of Sin and of ^{17.} Danger, and every Way doing the Duty of good

1 Pet. v. 4. *Shepherds, toward the Flock ; that when the great Shepherd shall come, they may receive of him a Crown of Glory.* How diligent was Christ in the ministerial Work, *in the Day teaching, and in the Night praying,* scarce taking the needful Means and Seasons for Refreshment? And so his Apostles after him ; *Daily in the Temple, and from House to House,* they preached Christ. Some good Proportion of like Industry should all Ministers shew, who would have the Gospel come to their People with a Fulness of Blessing. The Slowness and Dulness of some, the Subtlety of Satan to hinder, the Business and Cares of the World, that are ready to fill the Minds, and distract the Thoughts of many, the Prejudices of Multitudes, the Dread of the Cross, and of sufferings for Religion and the Gospel's Sake ; these are Pull-backs, and what make the greatest Care, and Pains, and Watchfulness of Ministers needful ; to which therefore they should be willing, and buckle to, for the Honour of GOD, and the Good of Souls. That's a second Thing, then ; Ministers, who would have the Gospel come with a full Blessing to a People, need (being furnished the best they can with Ministerial Gifts and Graces) *lay them out with greatest Diligence and Faithfulness to such Purpose.*

[3.] THEY need follow their Endeavours with Watching to every Thing that may further, and not hinder the Success of them. As,

1.) GOOD Example. They should teach not only in the Pulpit by Preaching, but in the Life too by holy Walking, in all good Things, being an *Ensample unto the Flock.* Said St. Paul to Timothy, *Be thou an Example of Believers, in Word,*
 1 Pet. v. 3. 12. *in*

in Conversation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity: And to Titus; In all Things shew thyself a Titus ii. 7, Pattern of good Works, that he that is of the contrary Part, may be ashamed, having no evil Thing to say of you. Ye are our Witnesses, and God also (said 1 Thess. ii. the same Apostle to the Thessalonians) how holily, 10, 11. and justly, and unblameably, we behaved ourselves among you that believe; as ye know how we exhorted and charged every one of you, as a Father doth his Children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his Kingdom and Glory. What they called on the People to do, they did themselves, exemplifying their Doctrine and Teaching, in their Lives and Conversations; so should Ministers do, that would further the Gospel's coming with a Blessing, shew good Example. And,

2.) DISINTERESTEDNESS, and Purity of Aims; making it as evident to the People as may be, that they are not acted by any base, selfish, and worldly Designs: That they seek not 2 Cor. xii. theirs, but them, to win them unto Christ, and 14. be a Means of securing and promoting their eternal Happiness: That they more desire and study their spiritual Profiting, than any outward temporal Advantages to themselves by them. The more spiritual, and unmixed with secular and worldly Designs and Views, a Minister's Actions appear, the more likely to avail to good Purpose. And so,

3.) HUMILITY and Meekness in their Temper and Carriage. The Servant of the Lord (says 2 Tim. ii. the Apostle) must not strive; but be gentle unto all 24, 25. Men, patient, in Meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if peradventure, God will give them

Repentance : Intimating, such a Way of Dealing
 Matth. xi. to be likeliest to soften. *Learn of me*, (said our
 29. Saviour) *for I am meek and lowly in Heart*. This
 fits to bear with the Infirmities of those that
 learn, and has Aptness to hearten, and encour-
 age, and draw them on to what is good, when
 Pride and Passion would discourage, and hin-
 der : *The Wrath of Man worketh not the Righte-*
 James i. *ousness of God*. Ministers, therefore, who would
 20. not obstruct their own Endeavours, will take
 heed of that, and imitate their Great Lord ; *The*
 Matth. 20. *Son of Man*, (said he) *came not to be ministered*
 28. *unto, but to minister*. And as he was in the
 World, so, surely, should his Servants and Mi-
 nisters be in the World, humble, and full of
 Meekness and Patience. And,

4.) TENDERNESS, and ready Sympathy
 with their People, in their several Cases of Affliction
 and Trouble ; as well as Pleasure and Rejoycing
 in their Prosperity ; and Accommodating themselves
 to them for their Good, in all Things lawful, or in-
 2 Cor. xi. different. I put here several Things together : *Who*
 29. *is weak, and I am not weak ? Who is offended, and*
I burn not ? said St. Paul. He was affected
 with the Condition and Circumstances of Per-
 sons, as the Nature of them required ; and this
 tended much to give him an Interest in their
 Affections, and so an Advantage to do them
 Good. *To the Weak, became I as weak*, (saith he
 elsewhere, not by a counterfeit, but a real Affe-
 ction and Sympathy) *that I might gain the Weak*.
I am made all Things to all Men, (i. e. all lawful
 Things) *that by all Means* (viz. that are just)
I might save some. He abounds in such like Ex-
 pressions, signifying, his studious Accommoda-
 ting to others for their Profit, and his great In-
 tentness

tentness thereon. *I will very gladly spend, and be 2 Cor. xii. spent for you, (said he to the Corinthians) tho' the 15. more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved: And in another Place: Tho' I am free from all Men, 1 Cor. ix. yet have I made myself Servant to all, that I might 19, &c. gain the more; to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; and the like he speaks there of the Gentiles. And in the Chapter following that, I please all Men in all Things, (says he) not seeking mine own Profit, but the Profit of Many, that they may be saved. And thus, of this Particular. And to all must be added,*

5.) CONSTANT and earnest Prayer, both for Direction and Help in their Studies and Preparations, and Success of their Endeavours. They know their Dependance on God in all, and therefore to Him they must, and will apply: *Neither is 1 Cor. iii. he that planteth any Thing, nor he that watereth; but 7. God that giveth the Increase: We are Labourers to- Ver. 9. gether with God; under Him, that is, and in his Hand; and what then can we do without Him? Ministers must pray for themselves and for the People, That GOD will be present with, and assisting unto both, and make his Word to prosper, that their Coming to them, may be in the Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ. Thus of the Part of Ministers, what it concerns them to be, and do, in order to this Effect. Now,*

(2.) As to the Peoples Part, much is incumbent on them in order to this Event, that the Ministry may have a full Blessing both on themselves, and on others.

[1.] ON themselves. In order to this, such Things as follow, are requisite, viz.

1.) THEY

I.) *THEY need to get, and heighten as much as may be, a Sense of their spiritual and eternal Concerns.* The Ministry chiefly respecting those Things, no Wonder, where Sense of them is wanting, if the Gospel and Ministry of it be little regarded, and the Blessing of it be wanting. The Gospel Institution is not an Invention of Men, a politick Means contriv'd by them, to subserve the Ends of civil Government, and to keep the World in Order; tho' it have a great Tendency that Way too, and therefore makes much for the Interest of States and Kingdoms, and the Good of human Societies, teaching what's for their Benefit, and binding human Laws, that are just and righteous, on the Consciences of Men, with stronger Inforcements than otherwise can be given them. But they are Matters of a spiritual Nature and Concern, relating to the Souls of Men, and their eternal Happiness, that the Gospel and the Ministry thereof has immediately and directly to do with; and its Value with Persons will be according to the Sense they have of those Things, be it more or less. If Men consider not what they are, by whom made, and for what Ends, and how they stand in Reference to those Ends; that they have a reasonable Nature, capable of moral Government, and therefore are necessarily under it; that their great Business is, to know, love, serve and obey their MAKER, in order to being happy in his Favour, and the eternal Fruition of Him; and that, what may give surest and best Directions and Help unto those Purposes must be of greatest Importance to them: where Men have not a Sense of such Matters, how is the Gospel like to be regarded, or to come to them with any

any good Effect? and especially, with any *Fulness of a Blessing*? If Persons advert only to Things temporal and worldly, and what relates to them, as Members of civil Societies; and consider not that they have precious, immortal Souls, made for everlasting Duration, and which must be happy or miserable for ever in another World, according as they shall be approved or disapproved by their Great RULER and JUDGE, when they go out of this: without lively Apprehensions of such Things as these, the Gospel is not like to be of any Use or Profit; but the firm Belief and affecting Sense of them, will prepare and lay some good Ground for the Benefit of it. Persons therefore should be thinking much of their Souls, and of their spiritual and eternal Interests, that they may be affected with them, and be made and kept most solicitous about them. Alas! what is the Body and the Things of it, compar'd with the immortal Spirit and its Concerns? What are the Things of Time, to those of Eternity? This short, narrow, limited Space, and State, to that large, comprehensive one Above? A Fulness and Eternity of Happiness, or of Misery, O, of what weight is it! Get, and heighten as much as may be, a Sense of these Things, which will be always profitable in this Matter. And,

2.) A N *Understanding of the Sutableness of the Gospel to those Concerns, and to the State and Condition whereinto Man is now fallen; this also is very needful.* Things are not now between GOD and Man, as when first He made him; he was then an holy, and happy Creature, shining in the Image, and delighting in the Love and Favour of his MAKER, dispos'd and fitted for serving,
and

Pfal. xlix.
12.

Gel. iv. 4.
5.

and for enjoying Him; he was dignify'd and blessed by GOD with a large Portion, made Lord and Ruler (under Him) of this lower World, with only a Reserve of one Particular for Trial of his Obedience, with a Threatning of Death and Misery on Transgression, and an imply'd Signification at least of continu'd and confirm'd, if not withal of advanced Life and Happiness, for persevering in his Integrity: But *Man being in Honour, did not abide*, hearkening to the Suggestions of Satan in the Serpent, and abusing the Liberty in which he was placed, he broke Covenant with GOD, forfeited the Good promised, and became obnoxious to all the threatned Evils. In this State, lost and undone as Man was, infinite Goodness and Mercy interposed, delivering him from going down into the Pit, and finding out and providing a Ransom for him. And *here is the Gospel*, the Discovery and Means of Recovering poor, lapsed, undone Man, and bringing him to the Enjoyment of GOD, in whom lies his Felicity. This Discovery first brake forth in that early Promise, *That the Seed of the Woman, should bruise the Serpent's Head*: i. e. Christ the Messiah, to be born of a Woman, should break the Devil's Power, and rescue his Prey out of his Hands, triumphing over Him in the Salvation of all those who should believe in him. And *in the Fulness of Time*, this Promise was accomplished, *God sent forth his Son, made of a Woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the Adoption of Sons*. What glad Tidings are here! How miserable was Man by his Apostacy! How unable to help and relieve himself! And how incapable of Relief by any mere created Power or Wisdom! yea, and unworthy too of any Relief by

by the Hand of God! His Sin against Him (by which he became miserable) was utterly without Excuse, and most highly aggravated by the Goodness of God, not only in Himself, but unto Man, and the great Obligations newly laid upon him; and in Regard of the Matter too, which, the less in itself, made it the more criminal to break with God upon it, when only that was the particular Test of Obedience, and special Instance of Homage requir'd. Yet now, in such a lost, criminal, as well as miserable State, and when others, of an higher Rank of Beings, were cast down without Remedy, and *are reserved in Chains of Darkness to the Judgment of the great Day*; Man is fallen thought of with Pity, and his Recovery provided for, in a Way, not only standing with the divine Perfections, but making for the more glorious Manifestation and Exaltation of them. Christ, the Son of God, becomes the Saviour of the World, *brings in perfect Righteousness*, and Dan. ix. delivers from *the Curse of the Law, being made a* ^{24.} *Curse for us: He died, the Just for the Unjust, that* Gall. iii. *he might bring us unto God.* Here is Relief for ^{13.} *Man's Guilt, and the Breach of the first Cove-* ^{18.} *nant; a Way of Pardon and Justification from all Sin, upon Repentance and Faith in the Redeemer: For the Blood of Christ, cleanseth from all* John. 1. *Sin.* Yea, the Gospel lets us know, not only ^{7.} of Pardon upon Repentance, but that Christ is ^{As. v.} *exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give Repen-* ^{31.} *tance and Forgiveness of Sins.* Faith and Repentance themselves, those prime, saving Graces, come thro' the Gospel, as well as Pardon and Salvation, upon them; so that here is a Remedy every Way fitted to, and as extensive as the Malady. Righteousness and Peace, Pardon

and Purifying, Grace to heal and strengthen, to guide and lead, and bring at last unto Glory, all come from Christ to us, thro' the Gospel: *He is made of God to us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption.* And thus of the second Thing, in order to Persons partaking of the full Blessing of the Gospel; *They need understand how suitable, and every Way adjusted it is to Man's fallen State and Condition,* with Respect to the Guilt, and to the Power of Sin; to his Impotency to Good, and Proneness to Evil; his Inability of himself, to do any Thing that's pleasing in GOD's Sight; that in these, and all the Distempers and Wants of Souls, here is what's every Way sufficient. This Understanding is needful, in order to a right Valuation of the Gospel, and of the Ministry, and Ordinances of it, and raising Hope and Expectation of Help thereby. But,

3.) THERE needs Apprehension likewise, That notwithstanding this Suitableness of the Gospel to Man's lapsed State; yet it does not operate to its saving Ends necessarily, but only as God is pleased to give Efficacy to it: All the Aptness that is needful, as a Means, it hath; but it will not work saving Effects, without an Almighty Manager. The Word is *Light*; but what can that do, unless divine Grace remove the Scales that are upon the Eyes? *The Light shined in Darkness,* (said St. John) and the Darkness comprehended it not. Man needs Sight, as well as *Light*: Open thou mine Eyes, (said David) that I may behold wondrous Things out of thy Law. And, said St. John, The Son of Man is come, and hath given us an Understanding to know Him that is true: Not the Faculty of Understanding, but the right Disposition and Use,

1 Cor. i.
30.

John i 1.

Psal. cxix.
18.

Use, to take in the Evidences of Truth, which otherwise would not be rightly seen. The Word is *Life*, but will not quicken dead Souls, without the Spirit of Life accompanying. It is *quick* Heb. iv. *and powerful, sharper than any two-edged Sword,* ^{12.} *piercing even to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints and Marrow, and is a Discerner of the Thoughts and Intentions of the Heart*; but in all this, it is to be understood as inforced by GOD, and set home on the Hearts and Consciences of Men by his Spirit; so it makes them see themselves, their Thoughts, and Frames, and the Motions of their Souls: But otherwise, the bare setting the Word before them, will not do; the outward Proposal and Display of Truths, tho' by the most skillfull Hand, and urging them with the most proper Arguments that can be thought of, will do nothing without a divine Influence to back and inforce them. *Who hath believed our Report?* said the Prophets: Isa. liii. Few or none had credited the Word preach'd; And why? *To whom* (saith he) *hath the Arm of the Lord been revealed?* If the Power of GOD go not with the Word of GOD, it will not have a saving Efficacy. Men by their Obstinacy and Refractoriness taking up, and indulging Prejudices against the Truth, GOD is provoked thereby to leave them to their Blindness. They who would have the *full Blessing of the Gospel*, need be apprehensive of this, that they may not lay too much Stress on the best outward Means, nor slight any faithful Ministry; but look at the divine Concurrence in one, and the other, without which, the best cannot reach the Mark, and with which even weaker Instruments may: *We* 2 Cor. iv. *have this Treasure in earthen Vessels, that the Excellency of the Power may be of God, and not of us*; may

appear to be so, GOD delighting to do great Things by weak and feeble Hands. That's a third Thing, then, *There needs Apprehension, that notwithstanding the Sutableness and Congruity of the Gospel to the Condition of fallen Man, yet it works not necessarily,* nor at the Will and Pleasure, and by the Power of Man, but under the Influence of the Spirit of GOD. Some have been ready to conceit, Man with his own reasonable Faculties, under the external Light of the Word sufficient, without any Need of inward supernatural Illumination and Help; but better Acquaintance with the Scriptures, and the Power of Corruption in the Hearts of all, would teach otherwise. Were there no more than bare Nature, and human Will, vitiated as it is; Old Satan, with that Advantage on his Side, would be too strong for young Melancthon, as he confess'd. Alas! where there is such Blindness of Mind, such Hardness of Heart, such Prejudices against the Truths and Ways of GOD, and Dislike of every Thing that is of an holy Nature or Tendency, what can be done to any saving Purpose, till GOD come by his Grace, and *work all our Works in us* and for us? A Sense of this is highly needful. And to proceed: Tho' GOD may, and perhaps sometimes does, surprize Persons graciously, and prevent them with his Goodness, being *found of them that sought him not, i. e.* who were going on carelessly, and minding nothing of their spiritual and everlasting Concerns, tho' He has by some Word or Providence wrought savingly upon some such; yet,

Rom. x.
20.

4.) GOD expects and requires Persons should use the Powers they have, and do the best they can toward the Good needed, viz. This Blessing of the Gospel,

spel, and the fullest Measures and Degrees of it. And this their Care and Endeavour, may be applied two Ways, viz.

1.] To get free of *what's obstructive*, And.

2.] To enquire after, and use in the best Manner, *what may be helpful and furthering to the Fulness of this Blessing.*

OF these in Order :

1.] To get free of *what's obstructive*, viz.

(1. THE Prevalency of Corruption in the Nature, which makes it like bad and unfit Soil, where the Word, when sown, will not prosper. If it be,

OBJECTED, and said, But what can we do? Is not this itself a great Part of the Gospel Blessing? And how then is it proposed to our Endeavour in order to it?

A. 'TIS true, 'tis both a Part of the Gospel Blessing, and a Preparation unto more; when the Unregeneracy of the Heart is removed, here is the happy Beginning, and the hardest Step; what follows, is a Change in Degree only, this in Kind. If it be still

OBJECTED, But what can the Unregenerate do? Is not that a State of spiritual Death? Eph. ii. 1. And can the Dead do any Thing?

A. WHILE natural Life continues, there is Capacity of spiritual; and 'tis the Language

Jam. iv. 8. guage of Scripture, *Cleanse yourselves, and make*
 Ezech. *ye a new Heart, &c.* Not that Man can do this
 xviii. 31. of himself; for *We are born not of Blood, nor of the*
 John. i. *Will of the Flesh, nor of the Will of Man; but of God,*
 13. He, and He only, is the Author and Worker of
 the first holy Change: but the Meaning is, Do
 what in you lies in the Use of Means, be sensi-
 ble of your Need, and of your Impotency, and of
 the Inability of any but God to do it, and seek
 to Him in his Ordinances, hear his Word, by
 the Calls and Exhortations of which He works,
 making Men New, when He bids them be so;
 for his Words, when his Power goes with them,
 are creative of what He commands: He cleanses
 by bidding, *Be clean.* Harken then to the Voice
 of his Gospel, and pray that his Power may
 accompany it to your Healing. He that bids
 Sinners *turn themselves, and make themselves a new*
 Ezek. xiv. *Heart,* hath promised to *turn them, and give*
 6. *them a new Heart:* There are Promises of Grace,
 Mal. iv. 6. *as well as to Grace,* to engage and encourage
 Ezek. *Sinners to seek to the God and Giver of it.*
 xviii. 31. *Go to God therefore for it, get the Prevalen-*
 —xxxvi. *cy of the Corruption of Nature remov'd. And*
 26. *that being done,*

(2. LABOUR to mortify the Remains of it
more and more. In Porportion as Sin and Cor-
 ruption is subdu'd, Grace and Holiness, and
 other great Blessings of the Gospel, will be ad-
 vanc'd. And now being regenerate, here is
 an active Power, and Principle, under the In-
 fluence of the divine Spirit, to oppose and beat
 down Sin more in the Soul. *Acti agunt;* the re-
 generate Part sets in with the Motions of God's
 Spirit, stirs up the Heart against what is evil,
 and puts upon further Cleansing from Filthiness
 of

2 Cor. vii.
 1.

of *Flesh and Spirit*. Take Part with this Principle, then, and improve it to greater Morification of Sin, which will make Way for the fuller Blessing of the Gospel. Particularly,

[1. GET the *Blindness of the Mind* more cured. This, so far as it remains is a great Hindrance of Advancing in Holiness. 'Tis by Ignorance, Satan has his Advantage to hinder Profiting: *When any One heareth the Word of the Kingdom, and Matthew understandeth it not; then cometh the wicked One, xiii. 19. and catcheth away that which was sown in his Heart.* Get this Blindness of Understanding therefore more cured. And,

[2. GET the *Hardness and Insensibleness of the Heart* more remov'd. Tho' old Heart, is an Heart *Ezech. of Stone*, that resists and beats back the Word and *xxxvi. 26.* Counsels of GOD, and in Proportion as it remains will not admit the Word to enter; it sinks deep in a soft, tender Heart, and makes lasting Impressions there, which it will not where much Hardness continues. The Removal of this more fully therefore, needs to be look'd to. And likewise,

[3. GET the *Earthliness and Carnality of the Affections* more done away. Thro' this the Soul, is ready to turn from spiritual Objects, instead of embracing of, and closing with them; at least, its Vigour and Strength in pursuing what's good, is abated, and thereby the *Fulness of the Gospel Blessing* is hinder'd. This must be striven against and remedy'd, that the Delight may be more in GOD and his Word, which will prepare for fuller Communications from Him. And to add one Thing further,

THE

[4. THE *Violence and Inordinacy of the Passions needs be cured.* The Passions in their Nature and Use are profitable ; but when Corruption throws them into Disorder, the Mind is blinded, and all put into Confusion ; such, for the Time, can neither hear, nor speak, as they should ; Reason and Judgment are cast from the Throne, and what Good then is to be done or gotten ? Watch against Disorder therefore here. Especially,

[5. BEWARE of the Sin that most easily besets you ; that which hath been, and which still is most apt to be, the *Peccatum in deliciis*, the *darling Sin*. Here is most Danger, by this is the Soul most like to be pulled down, and hindered as to spiritual Improvement. Satan's Attacks are mostly here, as the weakest Part, and where he is most likely to make a Breach and enter, and lay waste the Soul. Look therefore in a special Manner that this be kept under, whether it be Worldliness, Intemperance, or Lust, which has a special Tendency to drive away the good Spirit, and hinder this full Blessing of the Gospel. This is the first Head of Direction, Get free from what's obstructive of this full Blessing of the Gospel. And not only *remove Hindrances* ; but,

2.] APPLY your Endeavours to every Thing that may help to, and further this full Blessing, viz.

(1. GET the best Frame and Disposition for it :
 Psal. xxv. Be meek and humble. Such God will teach, and
 9. with such He will dwell ; and where God dwells,
 Isay. lvij, there will his best Blessings be. Endeavour
 15. after

after Spirituality and Heavenliness of Mind and Heart; where the Habit and Disposition of the Soul is so attempered to divine Things, fuller Communications will be vouchsafed.

(2. USE all appointed Means and Ordinances to this Purpose, viz.

[1. PRIVATE and secret Duties in the Family and Closet. Read and study the Scriptures, let them be your Meditation, and the Subject of your Converse, in all fit Seasons, think and talk of them, *rising up, and lying down, and walking by* Deut. vi. *the Way.* Examine yourselves often by this Rule, 7. try your State, your Frame and Carriage, your Proficiency or Declensions in what is good. Whoever would have a full Blessing of the Gospel, needs take heed that no Means be neglected, and frequently to turn inward, to see how he thrives, or goes backward in the divine and heavenly Life. Be as much in reading the Scriptures and other good Books, as Time, and Opportunity, and your Circumstances, can admit; and instruct those under your Charge: He that *thus waters, shall be watered himself.* Prov. xi. 25. And especially, be much in praying to, and praising of GOD; let Family Prayer, and secret Prayers, be constantly and seriously minded. These we may almost take to be convertible; the *praying*, will be the *thriving* Christian; and such as *neglect*, or are *careless* and *formal* in that Duty, if they have Grace, will sadly *decay* and *sink low* in it. This is the Breath of the New Creature, without which it can't live. Look to these private and secret Duties therefore; and regard

Q

[2. PUBLICK

- [2. PUBLIC Ordinances on the Lord's-Day, and on other Days, as Opportunities offer, and Time for them can be redeemed. These are the great instituted Means of spiritual Growth, and obtaining the full Blessing of the Gospel : Hearing the Word, receiving the Sacrament, joyning in publick Prayers and Praises, Attendance on Fasts and Thanksgiving-Days, as the Providences of GOD call to the one, or the other :
- Psal. lxxxvii. 2. *The Lord loveth the Gates of Zion, more than all the Dwellings of Jacob.* As GOD is most honoured in publick Ordinances, when many gather together to worship and pay homage to Him ; so here is his special Delight, and most of his gracious Presence : *Christ walks in the midst of his golden Candlesticks.* Where any Number are gathered together in his Name, there is He in the Midst of them. And where He thus comes, the Blessing comes, according to what GOD Himself saith : When He had given Instructions for his publick Worship, in all
- Rev. ii. 1. *Places (adds he) where I record my Name, I will come to thee, and bless thee :* that is, where my Ordinances are celebrated, there will I come ; and not empty handed, but full of Blessings, to bestow upon those who sincerely seek and worship me. On this Account pious Persons say,
- Matthew xviii. 20. *as David : Lord, I have loved the Habitation of thy House, the Place where thine Honour dwelleth :*
- Exod. xx. 24. *viz. for the Communion to be had with GOD there, and the Plenty of Blessings, by those Means to be received from Him : Hither therefore come.* Blessed is the Man that beareth me,
- Psal. xxvi. 8. *(saith GOD) watching daily at my Gates, and waiting at the Posts of my Doors.* Thus then, having a meet Disposition and Frame for this full Blessing,
- Prov. viii. 34.

sing, use the Means, especially publick Ordinances; yea, use them to work that Disposition if wanting, and increase it where it is, as well as to bring the Blessings themselves into the Soul. But then,

[3. THE *best Manner of Discharge of these Duties, and Attendance to the Means, is to be looked to also, viz.*

§. 1. THAT *it be with Preparation: Keep thy Foot* Eccles. v. *when thou goest to the House of God.* Don't go precipitantly and rashly, rushing upon such holy and solemn Work, without Consideration what it is that thou goest about; collect your Thoughts, unite your Affections, fix your Mind and Heart upon what you address to; beg the Help and Assistance of God to yourself, and to the Minister. If it may be, in solemn earnest Prayer before going to publick Ordinances, strive for a humble and teachable Frame, and to engage God's Presence with you; plead and wrestle hard with Him to such Purpose. Thus *before coming to the House of God;* And,

§. 2. LOOK to your Frame and Carriage there, that it be serious and awful, suitable to the Great Object of Worship, the Nature of God's Ordinances, and the high Importance of the Matters you come upon; remembering they are the Concerns of your Souls, and of their eternal Happiness. Keep the Senses, the Eye and the Ear, that they don't by Misapplication draw away the Mind; watch the Thoughts, that they don't start aside from the Matter in Hand; be attentive in Hearing, that you may understand, and

² Thes. ii. the Word may enter the Soul; *receive the Truth*
^{10.} *in the Love of it, mix it with Faith*, esteem and
 Hebr. iv. value it more than *Gold or Silver*, or even than
^{2.} your *necessary Food*; earnestly desire Knowledge,
 Psal cxix. thirst for it, and joy and rejoyce in the Word,
^{72.} let it be your greatest Delight; mingle frequent
 Job. xxiii. Ejaculations in Hearing for God's teaching to
^{12.} accompany it: *Lord, help me to understand this*, to
 Psal. cxix. *remember that, to hide it in my Heart, that I may*
^{11.} *not sin against Thee.* Let the Mind and Heart
 be suitably engaged in every Duty; whether
 Prayer, or Praise, or Hearing, or receiving
 Sacraments; and keep close to it, throughout:
 This is the Way to a *Fulness of the Blessing of*
the Gospel of Christ. Thus *look to the Heart and*
Behaviour in the House of God. And then,

§. 3. TAKE heed after also, how you retire and go
 from it: Let it not be with Haste, and Hurry;
 go leisurely to other Matters, endeavour to re-
 tain what you have heard, and fix deep the Im-
 pression of Ordinances; repeat Sermons in
 your Family, converse, and talk, and meditate
 on them, and especially pray them over; turn
 them into Matter of Confession, where they fix
 any criminal Charge upon you; into Petition
 for Pardon of Failings and Miscarriages, for
 Grace and Strength to be and do better in
 Time to come, to increase *with the Increases of*
 GOD; and Thanksgiving, for any Help and
 Assistance, any Communion with GOD, in his
 Ordinances. And be sure, pursue the End of
 Ordinances in the Life, be more watchful a-
 gainst Sin, more ready and furnish'd to every
 good Work, serve GOD with more Cheerfulness
 and Vigor, do all that is incumbent upon you
 in your several Relations and Callings, in better
 Manner

Manner than ever, be *fruitful and abounding in good Works*. Endeavours thus seriously, constantly and heartily apply'd, will not fail of a good Issue, even a *Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ*. And thus of the Peoples Part, in order to this Event in reference unto themselves. The other Branch is,

[2.] THAT *what they can, they promote the same in reference unto others*. To this Purpose,

1.) THEY should pray earnestly, That the Word of the Lord may have free Course, and be glorified; that the Virtue and Power of it may be seen in its mighty Effects on the Hearts and Lives of Many; a great Door and effectual being opened unto the Dispensers of it, and none able to hinder. And they should not only pray; but,

2.) THEY should strive in all the Ways that they are able, that it may be so. They are to be Fellow-helpers to the Truth; not only by encouraging and supporting the Dispensers of it; but in their own Lives and Examples, rendering it as amiable as may be, and as they have Opportunity and Ability, spreading the Knowledge of it; and should take heed of every Thing that may beget Prejudices; such as Narrowness of any Principles or Way, not grounded upon the Word, Unchurcing or Unchristianing any whom CHRIST will own and receive, all unnecessary Singularities, and Uncompliance with others in Things indifferent for their Good, all Pride and Unconversibleness, morose, and peevish Temper and Behaviour. They should readily own and countenance, commend and

and further what is good in any. In a Word,
 Phil. ii. 4. they should be of a publick Spirit, *Looking every
 Man not on his own Things only, but on the Things of
 Ver. 21. others,* and especially *on the Things that are Jesus
 Christ's,* to advance his Honour, and promote
 his Interest in the fullest subjecting of many to
 him, and thereby an Abundance and Fulness of
 the Blessings of his Gospel to them : Study all
 Ways of doing Good, and expressing Love to
 the Souls of Men : Desire and endeavour their
 Welfare and Happiness, and rejoyce in it. And
 thus of the fourth general Head of Improve-
 ment of the Doctrine, *All Means need be used
 for obtaining and furthering the Success of the Gospel,
 in the best Manner, and fullest Measure that may
 be.* Again,

5. IN whatever Degree a Ministry is successful
 where it comes, let God alone have the Glory. As
 the Motions of the Gospel are by his ordering,
 so the Successes of it are at his Pleasure : *The
 John iii 8. Wind bloweth where it listeth ; so is every One
 Rom. ix. that is born of the Spirit. 'Tis not of him that
 16. willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that
 1 Cor. iv. sheweth Mercy.* He it is that makes to differ,
 7. both in respect of the Truth, and of the Mea-
 —iii. 6. sure of Goodness. *Tho' Paul plant, and Apollo
 water ; yet 'tis God that giveth the Increase :* All
 is according to his Influence, and of his free
 Grace. It holds in spiritual, as well as in
 Prov. x. worldly Things, *The Blessing of the Lord maketh
 12. rich ;* and if all be by his Blessing, 'tis fit that
 He have all the Praise. And farther,

6. LET such as live under a successful Ministry,
 be humble and watchful : Humble, remembring
 whence

whence it is that the Lot is so cast, where the Dews of Heaven fall so plentifully, and to so good Purpose; this is all from GOD's own distinguishing Goodness, not Merit or Deservings in those so favour'd: And watchful, that they *continue in this Goodness*, provoke not GOD by *Rom. xi.* Carelessness, or Sloth, to withhold or abate the ^{21.} Blessing. He bestows *freely*; but if Men slight his Gifts, and neglect the due Use and Improvement of them, He may take them away *justly*: *Phil. ii, 12,* *Work out your Salvation with Fear and Trembling*; ^{13.} *for 'tis God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good Pleasure.* Once more,

7. PITY and pray for those, who either want the Ministry of the Word, or want the Blessing. Alas! how many are there, who have not the outward Means! who *sit in Darkness, and in the* *Matth. iv.* *Region of the Shadow of Death!* Pray, that the ^{16.} *Day-spring from on high may visit such,* and that *Luke 1.* they may see the Salvation of God. And where ^{78.} *—iii. 6.* outward Light and Means are, how Many are still in Ignorance and Darkness, even in the Midst of those Means! continue dead under quickening Ordinances! destitute of the Blessing of the Gospel, under fullest Enjoyment of the Ordinances of the Gospel! or, at best, but with low and small Measures of the Blessing, when for their Time and Standing, they should have been much improved, and have attained high Degrees! This is, and ought to be for a Lamentation. May it be bewailed by us; so far especially, as it may be our own Case. Lament Barrenness and Unfruitfulness; pray that more of the Efficacy of the Spirit may accompany the Gospel, which is the *Ministration* ^{2 Cor. iii.} *of the Spirit.* ^{8.}

AND

AND may we strive, both Ministers and People, in all the Ways incumbent on us, that the Word may have its full Effect among us. That our Profiting may appear unto all, that the Ministry hath come to us in the Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ. May the GOD of all Grace to this best of Wishes say *Amen*.

FINIS.

*one want have a day of Paying
of other & receiving*



ERRATA.

PAge 3. line 31. read, *that being*. p. 13. l. 29. r. *finally, as 'tis design'd*. p. 71. l. 26. r. *comes*. p. 80. l. 1. r. *burns*; *work in, &c.* p. 105. l. 15. r. *Man fallen is*. p. 107. l. 20. *Prophet*.

Some other Mistakes Literal and in Pointing the Reader will Correct and Excuse.

